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# Welcome

Meet Grace Liu  
on page 8

## WELCOME TO FANTASY ARTIST

**I**n this issue we're focusing on some classic fantasy character tropes like heroes, warriors, magicians and even faeries.

I'm a big Studio Ghibli fan, so when I commissioned Chester Ocampo for this issue's cover image I had *The Secret World of Arrietty* – Miyazaki's riff on *The Borrowers* – at the back of my mind. I was getting a bit fed up of the usual Victorian-inspired fey because, lovely as they are, sometimes faeries need a bit of attitude. Chester's tiny character, with her rhino-beetle armour, is the kind of faerie that has experienced life on the edge. That, I think, is what makes a great fantasy character. Frodo and Bilbo Baggins are much braver than the greatest warriors in all of Middle Earth precisely because they'd rather be at home having tea and cake and yet they soldier on with their quests anyway.

In character design it's as important to portray personality as it is to portray physical attractiveness or the clothes and accessories that characters wear. This issue is packed with advice on how to pose and dress your characters... but to take them out of the dolls' house and into believability, attitude is everything.



April

## Get in touch with the team



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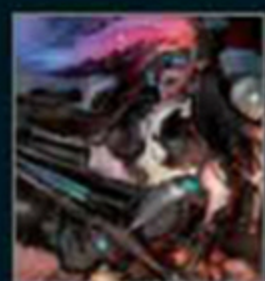
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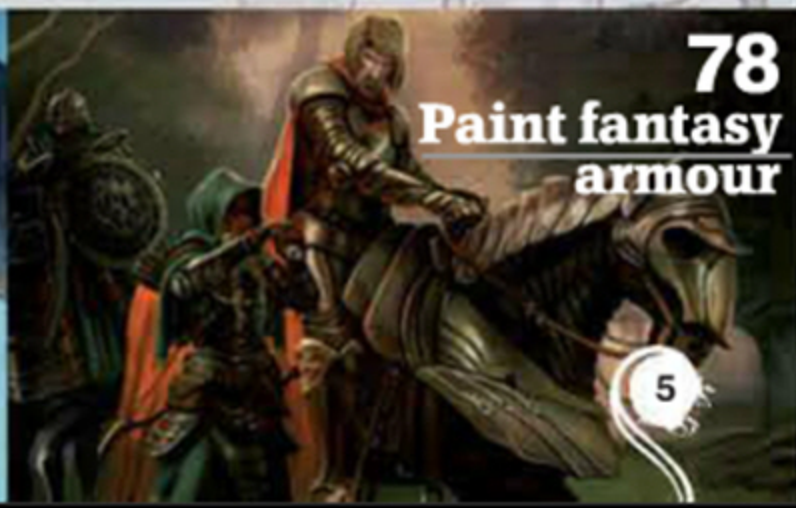


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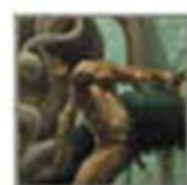
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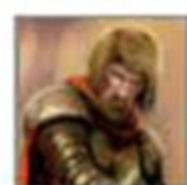
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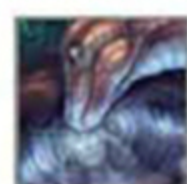
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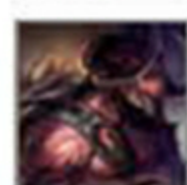
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# Contributors

## Chester Ocampo

[chesterocampo.net](http://chesterocampo.net)



Chester turns his talents to faerie art this issue, but gives it a distinctive twist. Find out how he created our cover image on p38.

## Mauricio Herrera

[el-grimlock.deviantart.com](http://el-grimlock.deviantart.com)



Mauricio brings us a bit of a *Falling Skies* flavour with a humans-vs-robots action scene. Discover his technique on p44.

## Ken Barthelmey

[theartofken.com](http://theartofken.com)



And it's another action scene from Ken, this time set in the leafy, jungle surroundings of a fantasy world. See it on p50.

## Rob Duenas

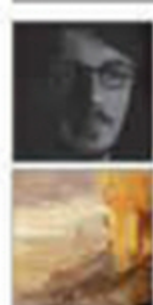
[www.sketchcraft.com](http://www.sketchcraft.com)



Learn how to draw and colour in Rob's inimitable style as he serves up a gorgeous lady knight character in his tutorial starting over on p56.

## Titus Lunter

[www.u2644.com](http://www.u2644.com)



Titus joins us this issue to explain some of the key points of successful fantasy landscapes. Get his tips for scenic success on p62.

## Suzanne Helmigh

[www.helmighs.com](http://www.helmighs.com)



The necromancer is a common character in games and books, but how many of us really know how to draw them? Suzanne explains on p68.

# The artists

Meet this issue's collection of experts

## En Gingerboom

[www.nattherat.co.uk](http://www.nattherat.co.uk)



Our Art Skills section kicks off like a proper fantasy quest this issue, in a dreamy village created by En. Learn how to make this scene on p74.

## Edward 'Joel' Wittlif

[tinyurl.com/paperbagininja](http://tinyurl.com/paperbagininja)



Lots of fantasy characters need to know how to handle a sword, so Joel shows how to depict some basic fencing moves over on p76.

## Abe Taraky

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Designing armour for one character can be tricky, so imagine doing it for a whole army of different troops and ranks! Find out how on p78.

## Michael Lückhof

[www.digitaldab.de](http://www.digitaldab.de)



How can you draw a giant without making him look just like a giant human? Learn how to use scale and environmental factors in your art on p80.

## Yangtian Li

[www.yangtianli.com](http://www.yangtianli.com)



Magical forest scenes are a classic trope of fairytale fantasy. Yangtian explains some top techniques for creating them over on p82.

## Robyn Drayson

[rajewel.deviantart.com](http://rajewel.deviantart.com)



Discover the different kinds of reflections and how they can enhance your fantasy art in Robyn's quick-fix guide to shiny things on p84.

## Matt Olson

[tinyurl.com/fa-matto](http://tinyurl.com/fa-matto)



Get to grips with some of the major mage character types like wizards, witches and shamans in this guide to magical characters on p86.

## Giuseppe Di Girolamo

[www.peppeti.blogspot.it](http://www.peppeti.blogspot.it)



Now you know who the characters are, learn to pose them effectively when they're using their arcane arts in this tutorial on p88.

## Jaclyn Havlak

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Get your first look at the Andrew 'Android' Jones video tutorial on our disc this issue with Jaclyn, executive producer at The Art Department, on p96.

# Fantasy Artist

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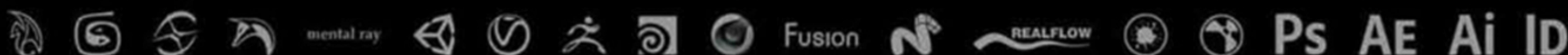
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## XIAOCHANG (GRACE) LIU

Artist info



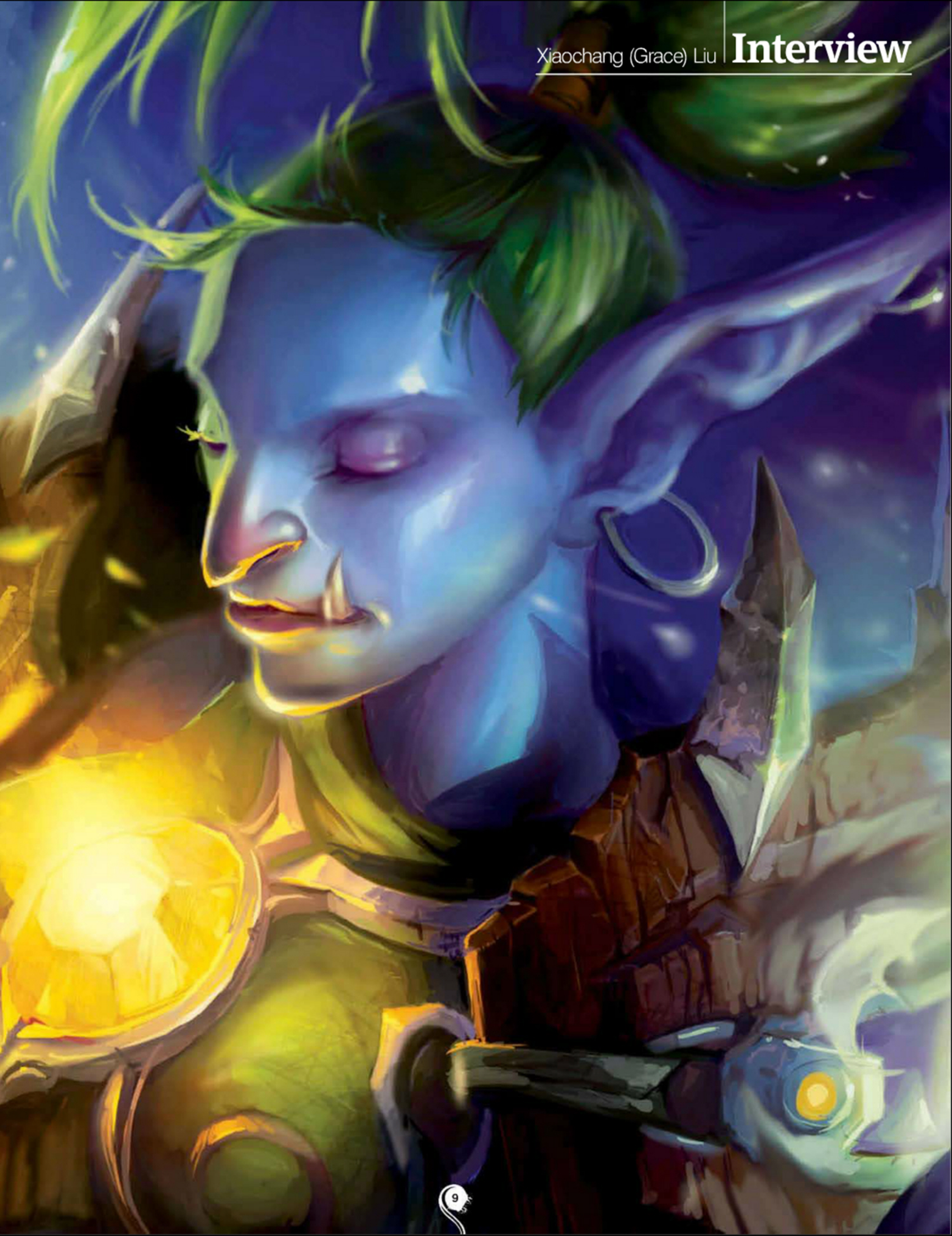
[liu-grace.blog  
spot.com](http://liu-grace.blog.spot.com)

Combining her passions of gaming and painting, Grace works as an environment artist for Blizzard and lives in California. Her varied portfolio includes graphic design, illustration, concept art and 3D work.

# Discover game art

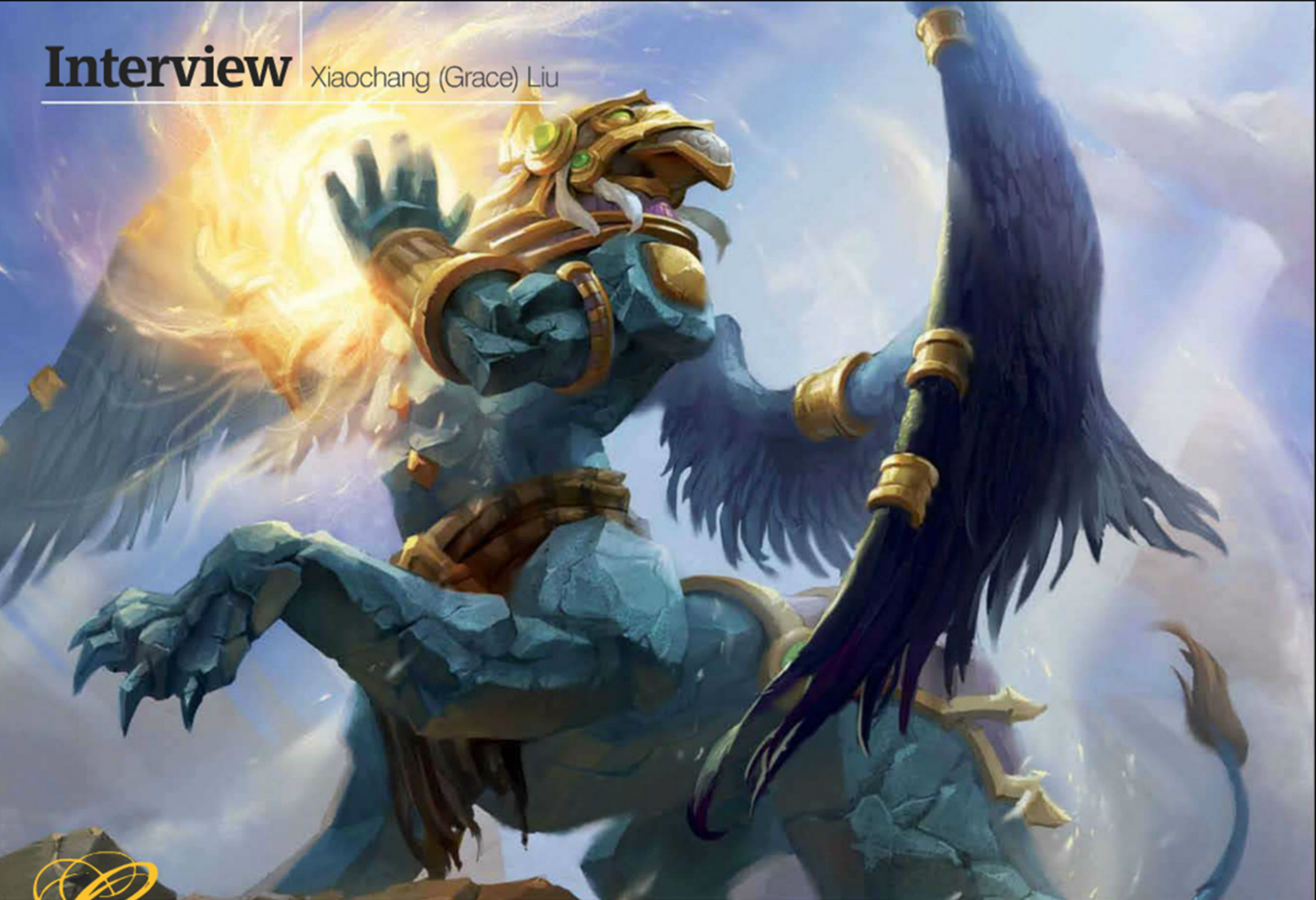
Discover how Grace Liu realised her dream to work at leading games studio Blizzard and her advice for budding game artists

“ I want to keep learning... keep my work fresh and open [myself] up to different ways of thinking ”



# Interview

Xiaochang (Grace) Liu



Growing up in the cool, creative northern Chinese city of Dalian, Xiaochang – aka Grace – Liu discovered fantasy in her teens thanks to iconic strategy game *Heroes of Might and Magic*. Moving to the US at the age of 17 to study art, she honed her skills and her love for the style, realising that she wanted to become a games artist shortly before finishing her first course of degree studies. After a post-grad in game art, she's now an artist for Blizzard, the iconic games studio behind the *World of Warcraft*, *Diablo* and *StarCraft* franchises. We find out more about her style and processes, her influences and how it feels to be living the dream.

## Tell us about yourself and your background?

I grew up in the city of Dalian, a beautiful seaport city in northeast China. I moved to the US after graduating from high school at the age of 17. After receiving a degree in graphic design, I decided to pursue a post-graduate degree in game-art creation.

## When did you first become interested in fantasy? Can you remember what it was that prompted your interest in the genre?

I had always loved novels and traditional Chinese myths. My first real contact with Western fantasy happened when I was in middle school. I happened to see a PC game called *Heroes of Might and Magic* in a bookstore, and immediately became obsessed with gryphons, dwarves, gargoyles and the like. I knew nothing about *D&D* or *Lord of the Rings*, but I sensed

that there was an over-arching system there. I became very curious about the Tolkien-inspired fantasy world.

## How would you describe your style?

I consider my style to be in the formative stage. I experiment a lot and change my process almost constantly. One thing that I love to play with [in almost every piece is] lighting.

## When did you first start creating artwork?

I created my first mural on the living room wall with a crayon at age two! I have always been drawing, but I didn't get serious about it until I realised that I wanted to be a game artist. The realisation happened a few months before I completed my undergraduate [university] degree.

## And when did you secure your first full-time job in the art industry?

Once I received my master's in game-art creation in December 2008, I was hired as a 2D/3D artist at Red Fly Studio, a Wii developer in Texas. I worked there for a year, making mostly UI design, 3D assets and concept art.

## What or who are your primary influences?

My mum is the first artist I [knew], and growing up watching her do Chinese ink paintings has definitely [left] a mark on me. My favourite artists are Rembrandt, Frazetta, Brom and Laurel D Austin.

## High Oracle Naseem (above), 2011

Photoshop © 2012 Blizzard Entertainment, Inc. All rights reserved. The powerful Tol'vir spreads his wings as immense holy power flows through his body

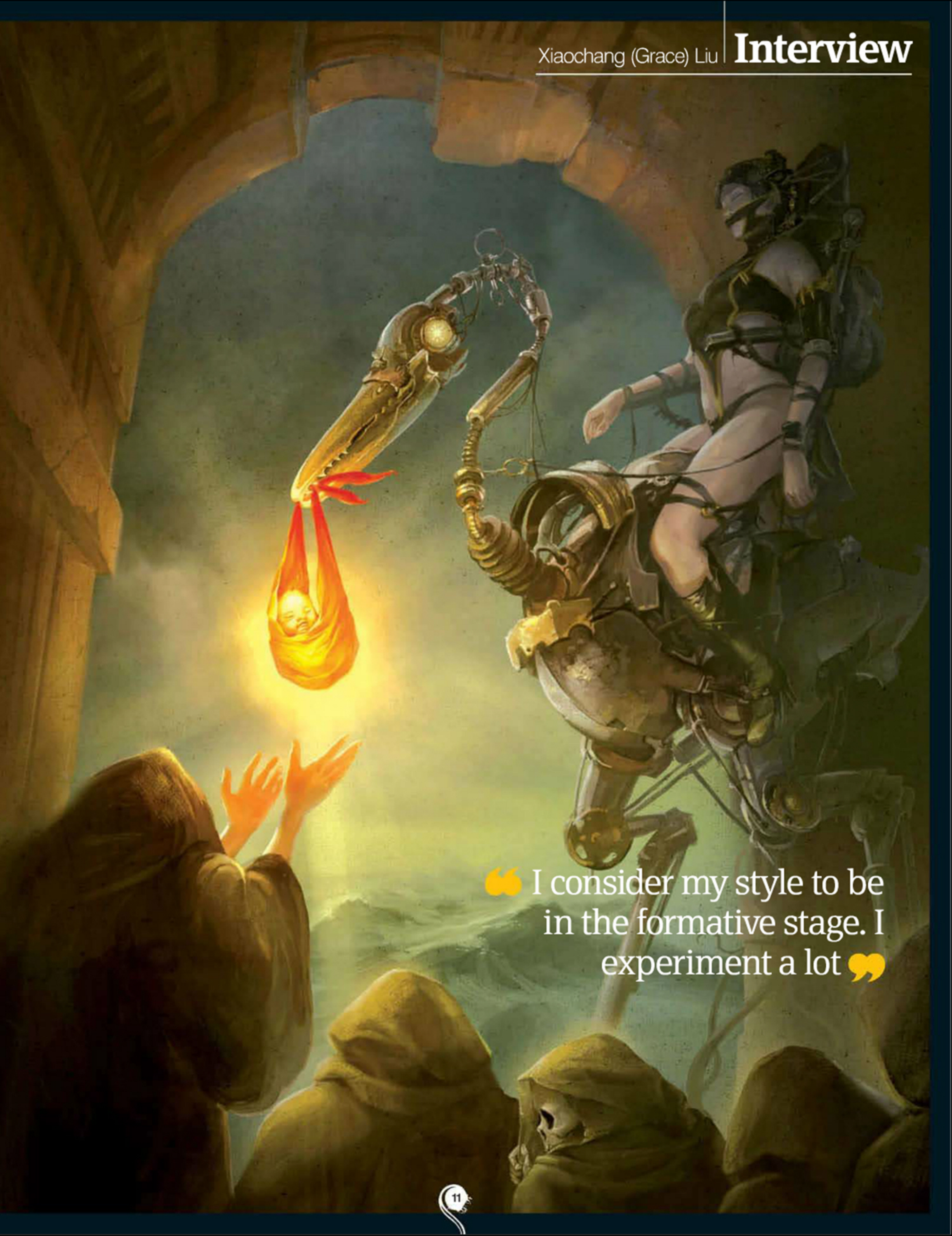
## Newborn (right), 2009 Photoshop

The machine gives a new baby to the world, while death patiently looks on

## The Werewolf (below), 2012

Photoshop He had a quest, a family, a lover. In a flash of piercing hunger, all were forgotten





“ I consider my style to be in the formative stage. I experiment a lot ”

“ My biggest inspiration comes from seeing other people’s work ”

● **Pyromaniac (above), 2011**  
Photoshop © 2012 Blizzard Entertainment, Inc. The pyromaniac is in his element. It burns. It’s burning. Everything. So pretty... so pretty!

GRACE

● **Sweetums, 2011, Photoshop**  
She’s well known for her superhero strength, but even better known for her super temper tantrums!



#### What inspires you?

Coffee seems to work fairly well. More seriously, though, my biggest inspiration comes from seeing other people’s work. I’m also fortunate to have some artist friends to discuss art and exchange critiques, which is a great help.

#### How did you feel when you first found out you’d got a job at your favourite game company?

I was incredibly happy, but [it] was a bit bittersweet as well. I made some breathless calls to my mom and boyfriend, and jumped around my first-floor apartment for a bit that evening. After calming down a bit, the reality of having to leave my friends at work and the state I [called] home began to sink in. Thankfully, everybody from both studios was incredibly supportive through this transition.

#### What’s your favourite aspect of game art and why?

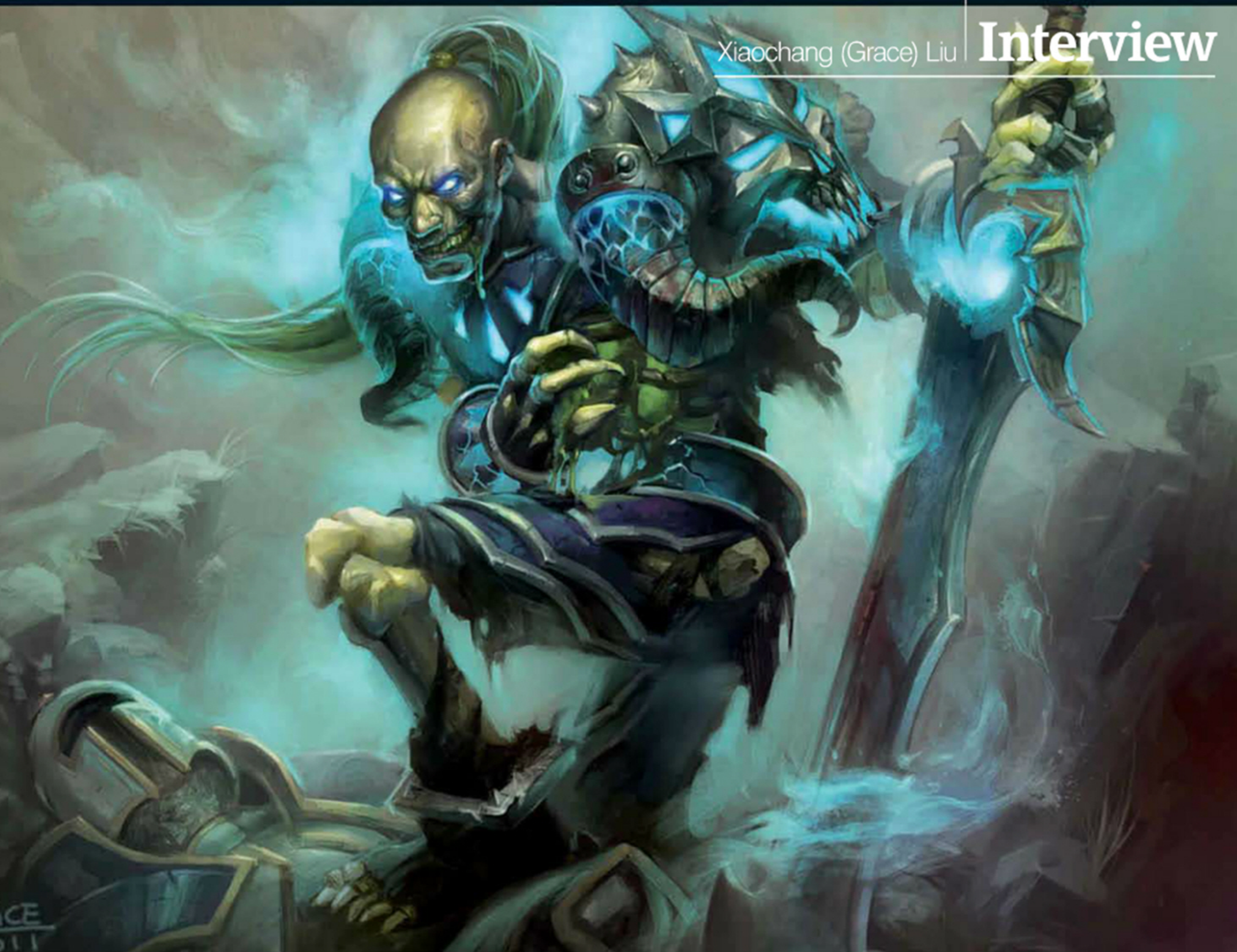
Currently, my personal goal is to become better at painting, design and storytelling. I am interested in learning about every aspect of game creation, though. Most of the games I loved when growing up were made by very small teams. One of the things I’d like to do is to make a game all by myself someday, purely for fun.

#### If you had to name one thing you’ve done in your career so far as a games artist that has had a huge impact on you and the way you create art, what would it be?

I used to panic when I ran into an artist’s block – a period of time where frustration takes over and productivity and quality stagnate. One of the most important things I’ve learned from working with so many talented artists is that artist’s blocks are perfectly normal, everyone gets it at some point in their work and it will yield to further growth in time. This knowledge gave me a lot of confidence and I stopped beating myself up [just because I was] having a few bad days.

#### Do you think it’s important for artists working in the videogames industry to be gamers themselves? Or can the passion be picked up?

I think as long as the artists understand games, and what kind of art works best for gameplay, they’ll do fine. Of course, loving the industry [you] work in is always a good thing in my opinion. It’s a lot of fun geeking out over new games with co-workers or jumping into co-op gaming sessions after hours. Shipping a game I love to play is one of the best experiences I’ve ever had.



**What are your favourite digital and traditional mediums or software to work in and why?**

I mainly use Photoshop. It's the first digital art software I picked up, and it's very versatile. Traditionally I've always liked watercolour because I admire a good watercolourist's thought process. I hope to someday be good at watercolour.

**Do you combine traditional and digital media in your work?**

I sometimes scan in pencil drawings and then digitally paint over them. I experimented with scanning in watercolour paintings and digitally touching them up, but [can] never quite capture the traditional charm. Most of the time I stay fully digital from the beginning of a piece until the end because it's much easier to make changes that way.

**Are there digital or traditional techniques or programs you'd like to learn more about?**

My current focus is on digital techniques. I'm always interested to see a fresh style and approach online, and sometimes try them out in my own work. I want to keep learning new techniques because they'll help keep my work fresh, and open me up to different ways of thinking.

● **Elderguard Brennan (above), 2011**  
Photoshop © 2012 Blizzard Entertainment, Inc. A brutal warrior, a knight of the undead

● **Brutal Bear Form (below), 2010**  
Photoshop © 2012 Blizzard Entertainment, Inc. A hideous, shape-shifting druid





“Some people are so talented they make everything look easy... but the best artists do not sit idly”



● **Arvos Jadestone, 2011 Photoshop**  
© 2012 Blizzard Entertainment, Inc.  
The shaman meditates, and the four elements of the world wait

● **Boogey Man (left), 2011 Photoshop** If you turn down an unfamiliar alley, you may run into the hooded executioner. He takes mercy on none and gives no warnings

● **Grace's workspace (below)** Here's where Grace's personal work happens, including the daily practice projects she sets herself to improve her illustration and painting skills



**Do you ever find yourself working digitally in a way that mimics traditional media? What are the benefits or disadvantages of this?**

Many thought processes that go into traditional media also apply to digital painting. I like to borrow the ideas of some traditional painters, but I don't try to mimic a particular traditional media on purpose. Someone once said to me: "If you want to make something look like ink, just do it in ink." That saying has stuck with me.

**Do you have a set workflow? What is it?**

Other than the coffee part, my workflow is pretty random. I blame my short attention span for that! Normally, if I actually take the time to develop a drawing before jumping into colouring, I tend to get better results. Doing so can take out some of the raw energy in a loose sketch, though, which is often a shame. Sometimes I just feel too impatient to draw, so I begin with large value blobs.

**You've worked on a range of cards for a TCG. What are the artistic challenges of the trading-card format, and what are the most rewarding aspects of working for it?**

The greatest challenge in TCG is readability. These illustrations are printed at a very small size, so the figure needs to separate from the background a lot more than [in] larger illustrations. I take these cards as personal challenges, and I feel really happy when a card comes out good and when I learn a lot from doing it. The feedback from the TCG's art directors helped me produce some of my best work so it has really helped me develop as an artist.

**On your blog there are a lot of lunchtime doodles and pre-work warm-ups. You obviously practise a lot to hone your craft. How important do you think this is for artists, especially younger ones? How much practice would you advise them to do?**

There's a Chinese saying that roughly translates into "the lame bird must fly harder than the rest." Looking at the overwhelming talent out there, I definitely feel the need to try my best to better my craft. For aspiring and younger artists, I believe the most important thing is to keep their eyes open and know where they stand in the competition. Some people are so talented that they make everything look easy and effortless, but the best artists do not sit idly.

**What would be your advice for any artist wanting to break into the games and TCG industries? What skills and practices will serve them best?**

An aspiring artist needs both a solid portfolio and [to be] proactive; you must have good work to show and put it out there so people can see it. Practise foundations and explore styles without hiding your weaknesses behind them. Look at online communities and published games, and keep in mind that you must aim a lot higher than matching the worst art in the industry to get in.

**Finally, what are your plans for the future?**

I hope to continue working with and learning from super-talented artists, as well as getting better at balancing work and family. I have taken a couple of watercolour trips in China, and hope to do more of these in the future, painting the streets of historical cities around the world.

# Community

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Fantasy Artist team



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## Villains and Assassins take over Berlin

An exhibition at Berlin's Strychnin Gallery focuses on  
the bad guys and girls of fantasy and sci-fi

The Strychnin Gallery was set up in 1998 in Brooklyn, New York, and since then has also opened spaces in London and Berlin. This autumn the latter plays host to a fantastic new exhibition entitled Villains and Assassins, which focuses on the titular bad guys and girls of fantasy art.

Executive director Yasha Young talks to **Fantasy Artist** and explains that the inspiration for the exhibition lies in "my childhood and my fascination with comics and more so the villains than the superheroes. It became apparent to me that the hero needs a nemesis in order to be the hero."

But these nemeses aren't the ones you're familiar with from movies, games and comics: "The aim was to offer a platform to play and develop for the amazing artists [featured] – something completely new and evolved, creating something of their own with a history, a past, a future. Every villain or assassin is a one of a new kind developed only for this show. This makes the work not only incredibly collectable and unique but also fascinating... we will see completely new characters with newly developed weapons and enemies. [It's] a great experience for the viewer and a fantastic opportunity for the artist to step out of an already established pattern and create freely without any restrictions or demands from a studio or publisher."

This has enabled artists to explore themes outside of the often one-dimensional baddies we're used to in conventional media, creating everything from burlesque killers to twisted creatures and dark magicians. With lots of artists on show, including Sacha Lees, Ben Templesmith, Toby Cypress, Paul Tobin, Greg Broadmore, Brynn Metheney, Menton 3, Ming Doyle, Jenny Frison, Riley Rossmo, Nathan Fox, Chris Newman, Richard Friend, Alberto Ruiz, Christian Gossett, Shane Pierce, George Pratt, Sho Murase, Christopher Mitten and many more, there's a vast selection of work to see, plenty of new characters to experience and frightening demons to face. Mediums range from crayon and colouring pencils to digital paintings.

What's exciting about this exhibition, says Yasha, is that "all of these artists are busy with Comic Con and movies in development as well as covers and deadlines, and yet they all took time out to make sure this show would be the most amazing event, and the work truly is outstanding."

Villains and Assassins is at Strychnin Gallery in Berlin until 9 September 2012. Part of the show moves to Comic Con NYC from 11 – 14 October 2012 – look out for it in the Strychnin Gallery booth.

● Learn more at  
[www.strychnin.com](http://www.strychnin.com)



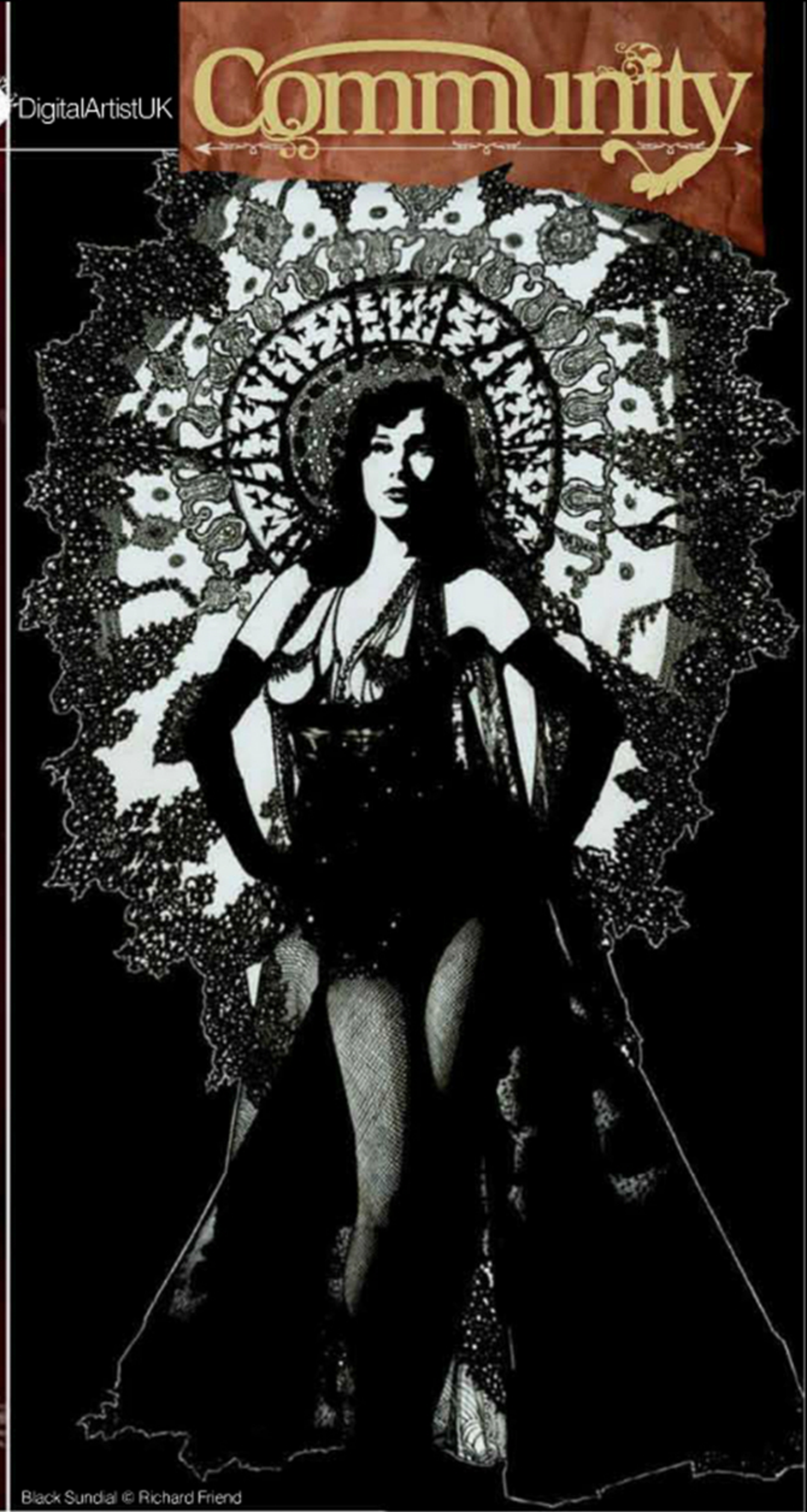
Yasha Young is the executive director of the Strychnin Gallery



Robot Killer © Greg Broadmore



The White Fox and Sherlock Holmes © Paul Tobin



Black Sundial © Richard Friend



Stag the Villain © Shane Pierce



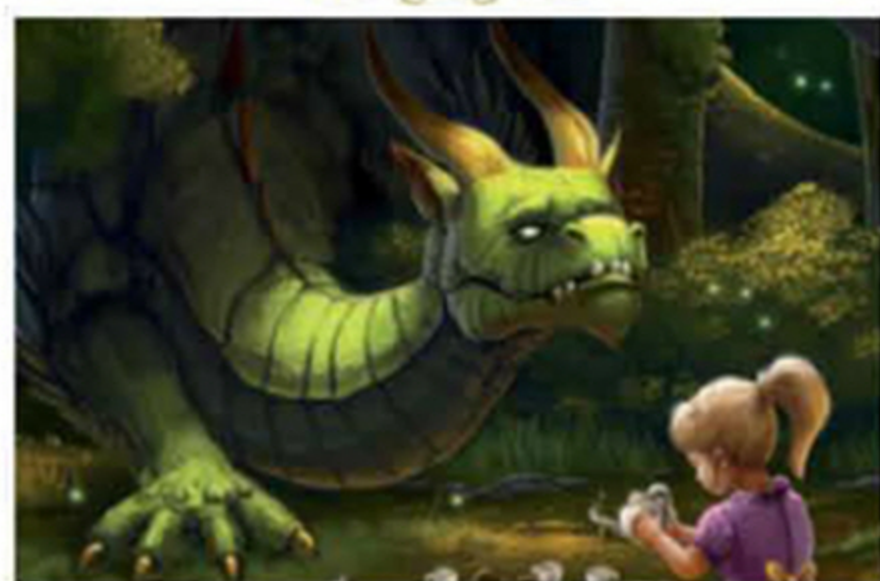
Legion © Riley Rossmo



Meridiana of Pope Sylvester II © Menton 3



This month we take a look at some of the most popular fantasy and sci-fi artwork that's been submitted to the galleries over the past few weeks



**Tea Time** by tsaoshin ([tsaoshin.deviantart.com](http://tsaoshin.deviantart.com)) is a wonderful illustration that reminds us of days gone by having tea with our favourite storybook friends.



**Ocean's Fury** by Nightlyre ([nightlyre.deviantart.com](http://nightlyre.deviantart.com)) caught our attention with its fantastic use of a minimalist palette and attention to detail.



**Knight of Infamy** by One-Vox ([one-vox.deviantart.com](http://one-vox.deviantart.com)) is part of a series of card designs commissioned for *Magic: The Gathering's* Core Set 2013.

Next month we'll be celebrating our 12th birthday, and will be taking a trip down memory lane to some of the most iconic fantasy work submitted by deviants. Until then, stay devious! [deviantART.com](http://deviantART.com) | [fiona@deviantart.com](mailto:fiona@deviantart.com)

## ● God of Will

This 2012 piece uses a wide-ranging colour palette to give a truly epic sense of scale. The sheer amount of detail in the many figures is brought to life by careful use of shadow and highlights

## Artist spotlight Kamyar Nasirifar

This Iranian artist creates stunning high-fantasy creatures and concepts



His home country might not be the first one you associate with classic high fantasy, but 25-year-old Iranian artist Kamyar Nasirifar has a fantastic grasp of, well, the fantastic, and it shows in every piece. "My main

interest is character concept art and illustration", he explains. "I like working on characters because they are the soul of a videogame, movie or animation. And applying different emotions and characteristics to them always fascinates me. Kind of makes me feel like a god!"

Godlike or not, Kamyar has a very distinctive style, but when asked to explain it, he demurs: "I'd rather my works speak for themselves! But usually I try my best to make them look realistic and artistic at the same time with extra attention to detail." Having been an illustrator for four years, Kamyar has honed his skills both on paper and in Photoshop. He has a relaxed but proactive approach to how he'll develop his work further: "Usually ambitions and dreams change through time! But right now my ambition is to be the best concept artist and illustrator I can be."

● Discover more of Kamyar's work at [www.kamyar.cghub.com](http://www.kamyar.cghub.com)

● **Shirvan** A hero developed by Kamyar inspired by the historic Persian region of the same name



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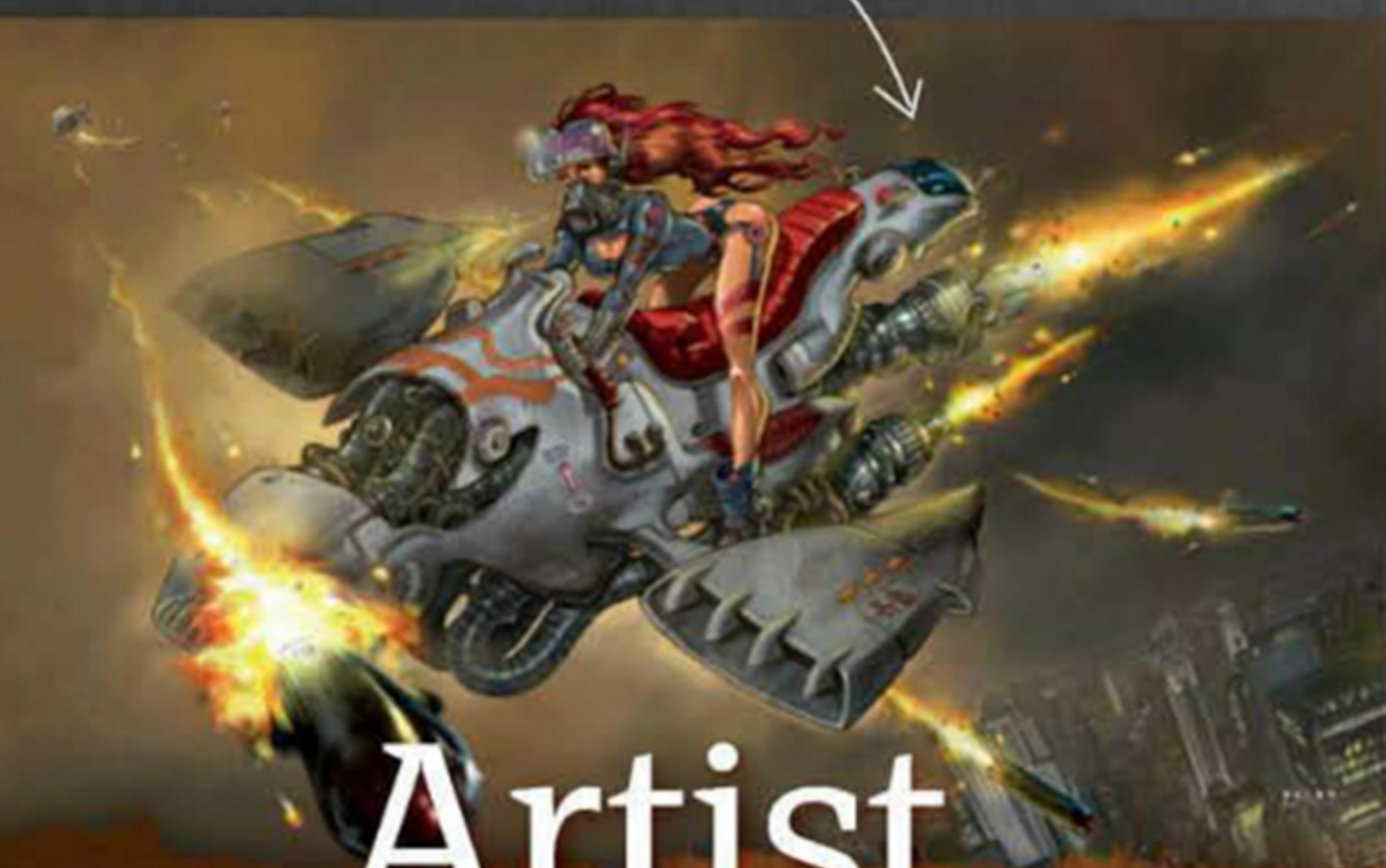
# Community



Missed Me!, 2010  
"Something futuristic but based on references of real bikes"

Soul Snatcher, 2011  
"I really had fun with the oversized wings"

Samurai Girl, 2011  
"In this image I wanted to play with the feminine details"



## Artist retrospective

Artist info



**RB WHITE** [rbwhiteart.blogspot.ca](http://rbwhiteart.blogspot.ca)

Many, many years ago, in the last century, I was trained as a traditional illustrator and animation artist.

My first contact with digital painting and a graphics tablet was in 1994. I was sure that digital painting would be just a waste of time and, as usual, I was wrong. Now I'm spending every minute of my free time with my tablet creating fantasy and sci-fi pin-up illustrations just for fun.

### Soul Snatcher 2011, Photoshop

● The final painted version is little different to the rough drawing. I started sketching and all the details were there so I just did the brushwork on a layer over the top. In the middle of the painting process I decided to change the face direction so she is looking at the viewer and to simplify the armour a bit. And I really had fun with the oversized wings.

### Missed Me! 2010, Photoshop

● The initial concept that I wanted to stick to for this piece was to create a nice-looking scooter – something futuristic but based on references of real bikes. When I finished my initial pencil drawing, though, it looked dead. So, like every good car show, I just added a nice-looking girl and a few burning rockets. Job done.



Tits and Guts, 2012  
"A beautiful woman with some interesting character detail"

Biancca, 2012  
"Short sleeves and tattoos make her look tougher"

You're Welcome, 2010  
"Started as a random doodle I made just to while away the hours"

Fallen Angel, 2010  
"A really beautiful pin-up look to contrast with her attitude"



## Samurai Girl

2011, **Photoshop**  
● In this image I wanted to play with the feminine details – jewellery, roses on her dress, lace and a belly button jewel, and as always I got carried away! I began adding details to every window pane, textures to the wooden parts and so on. It was fun working on this image and I really like the combination of delicacy and strength in the details.

## Tits and Guts

2012, **Photoshop**  
● I needed a cover for my book and I wanted to make a very vibrant image. For the most visual impact possible I wanted it to feature a character looking directly at the viewer. I wanted a beautiful woman with some interesting character detail and a weapon of some sort. And, of course, she needed a very strong and recognisable silhouette.

## Biancca

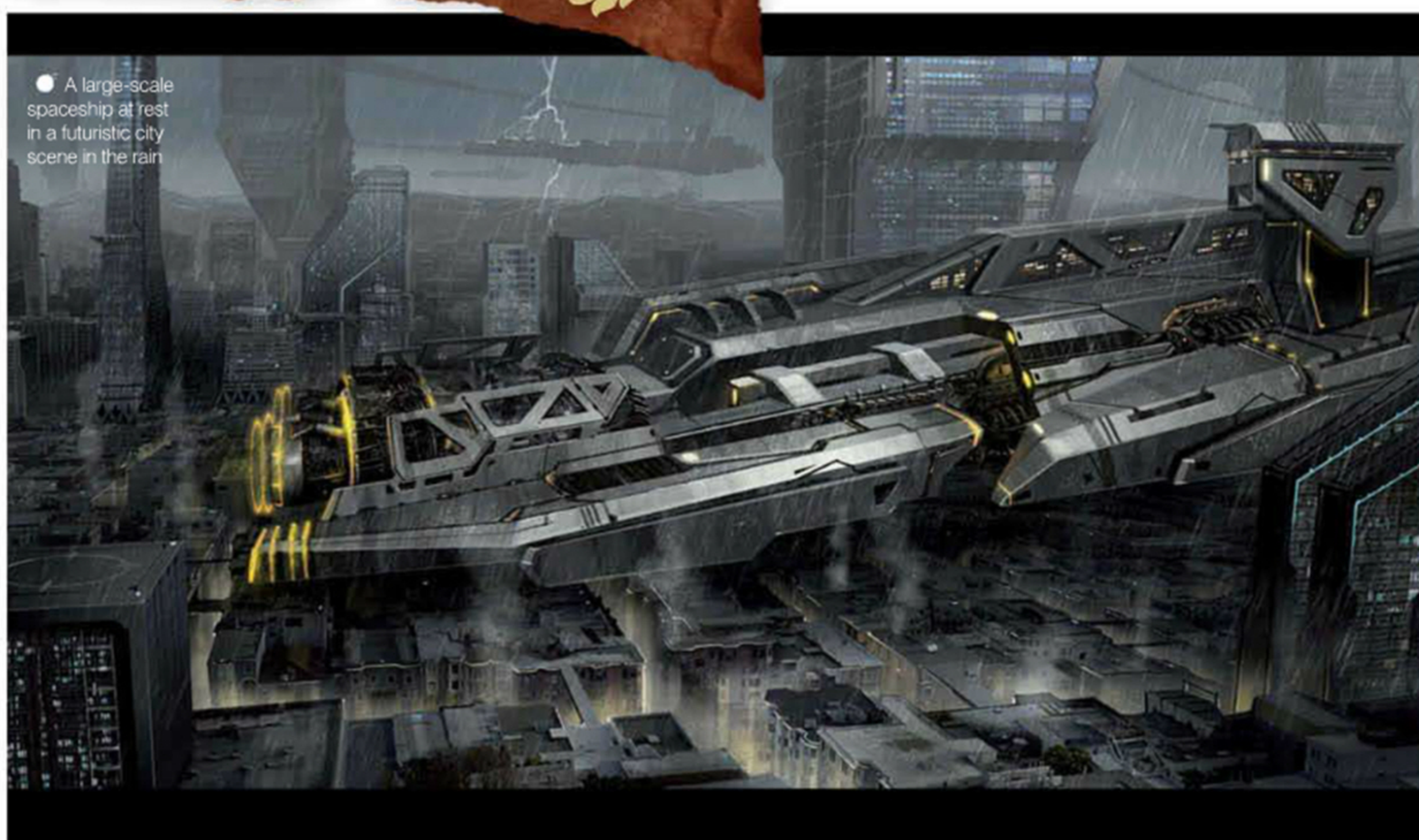
2012, **Photoshop**  
● I decided to add a T-shirt to the costume of this character mostly because it works so well with the tattoos. Short sleeves and tattoos make her look tougher and say a lot about the story behind the image. It's great to work digitally since you can create a lot of variations of the same character and then choose the best one.

## You're Welcome

2010, **Real media, Photoshop**  
● This girl started as a random doodle I made just to while away the hours, but I thought it looked so nice I had to add some colours. The palette is quite earthy to match the texture I created behind her, like aged paper. The brightest tones are actually in her dragon tattoo, which make it stand out.

## Fallen Angel

2010, **Photoshop**  
● Fallen Angel was first published in *EXOTIQUE 7* and features the fallen angel of the title holding a smoking gun as if she's just landed from a battle in the sky. I wanted to give her a really beautiful pin-up look to contrast with her attitude and the serious weapon that she's wielding – she may be damned, but she's damned pretty!



## Artist spotlight Gia Nguyen

A 23-year-old architecture student from Vietnam, Gia creates sci-fi-inspired concept art of environments and structures, and is aiming to break into the world of games design



Having started out digitally, using pencil and watercolour to practise, Gia now uses Photoshop CS6 with a Wacom tablet to create his concept environments, landscapes and structures. His background as an architecture student has enabled him to ground his fabulous structures in real

physics as well as push the envelope further into sci-fi territory, making his work believable yet fantastic.

"I've been a big fan of sci-fi since I was a child", Gia says of the genre he's passionate about. "I love all those awesome visuals from movies like *Star Wars*, *Star Trek*, *Blade Runner*... I love mechanical stuff and science facts too." But despite his sci-fi leanings, Gia is very much grounded in reality. "These days, I'm trying to achieve a realistic look for my work. My style is influenced by people like Khang Le, Ryan Church and David Levy."

Having been working in concept art for the past three years, Gia is still refining his skills and building up his portfolio with the aim of eventually gaining a concept-art industry role. "Right now my main goal is just trying to take my very first steps into the industry and doing my best", he says. "[I'm aiming for a job] as a concept artist working for films and videogames."

● Discover more of Gia Nguyen's work at [www.gia-nguyen.net](http://www.gia-nguyen.net).



● Gia built up this concept for a floating futuristic hotel from several sketches



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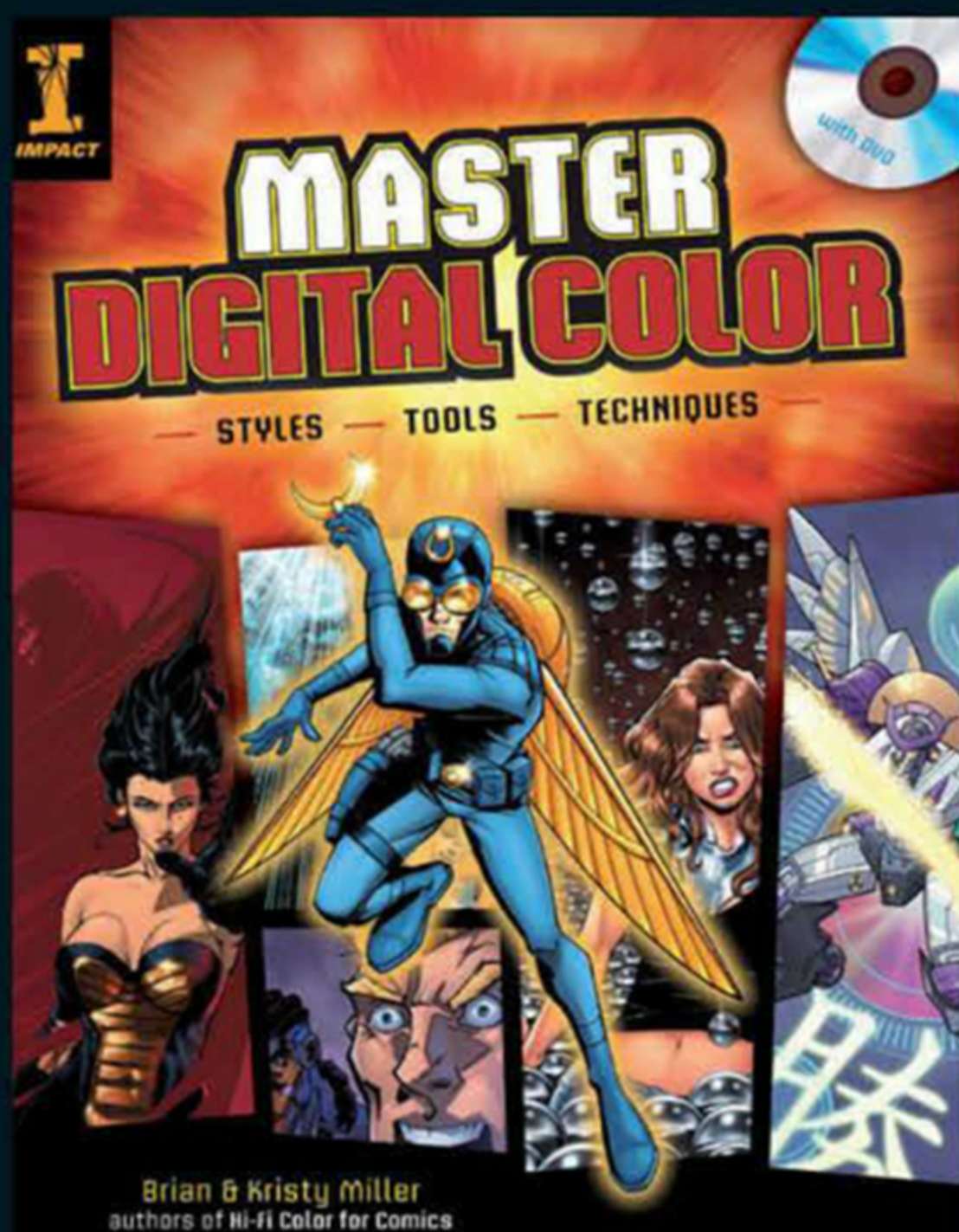
# Community

## Free fantasy art books

F&W Media needs reviewers like you!

Would you like to get fantasy art books for free? F&W Media is offering **Fantasy Artist** readers the chance to do exactly that. F&W Media specialises in creative titles, particularly fantasy and sci-fi art, created by some of the biggest names in the business. From advice on how to draw dragons from *Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* concept artist John Howe to tips and tricks for comic art from Marvel superheroes like Bryan Hitch, there are titles for every kind of artist of every level in F&W Media's extensive portfolio. The even more exciting news is that they're now offering you the chance to get them for free! So what's the catch? F&W Media is looking for people with blogs who are prepared to review the books honestly and in depth. You don't need to be a professional artist or a professional reviewer – they're just looking for fantasy art fans who would like to read the titles and who are prepared to tell the world what they thought of them.

With high-profile artists like Gary Tonge and genre-specific advice like how to draw dragons, adventure scenes, fantasy landscapes and much more, F&W Media's titles are a great resource for digital and traditional artists working in fantasy and sci-fi, and for those who'd like to learn more about how to create these beautiful art styles. F&W Media's imprints include David and Charles, Dover Publications and Impact Books, so you're guaranteed high-quality titles packed with excellent advice. For your chance to read them (and keep them!) for free, just drop F&W Media's marketing assistant Sandra an email and tell her a bit about your blog and the kind of fantasy art you're interested in. You can reach her at [sandra.gilmore@fwmedia.com](mailto:sandra.gilmore@fwmedia.com). Visit [www.davidandcharles.co.uk](http://www.davidandcharles.co.uk) and [www.impact-books.com](http://www.impact-books.com) to discover more of the fantastic titles on offer from F&W Media.



### CHINESE EXPEDITION

Crimes to continue on our expedition, Council...  
...in Beijing, China, we then transferred to Dalian,  
...our journey began.

Chinese yellow dragons, one of the most abundant  
...in the world, is only listed as endangered because  
...this magical animal has been strictly regulated by  
...government for many decades. Only within  
...few years have Chinese authorities allowed time  
...for tourists and dragonologists to come and study  
...the dragon after animal.

Chinese yellow dragons are most commonly found  
...mountainous rural regions and islands of Asia.

We, however, were not headed for the rural mountain  
...of China; we were directly into one of the most polluted  
...areas of the world, the Bohai Economic Zone, perhaps  
...the largest industrial center on the planet. The Bohai is  
...estimated to be home to over 100 million humans—more  
...than the entire population of Italy and England com-  
...bined within a space roughly the size of Iceland. We've  
...come here to see the native habitat of the Chinese yellow  
...dragon and the last remaining specimen that lives in the  
...wild here, Tong Long Hui.

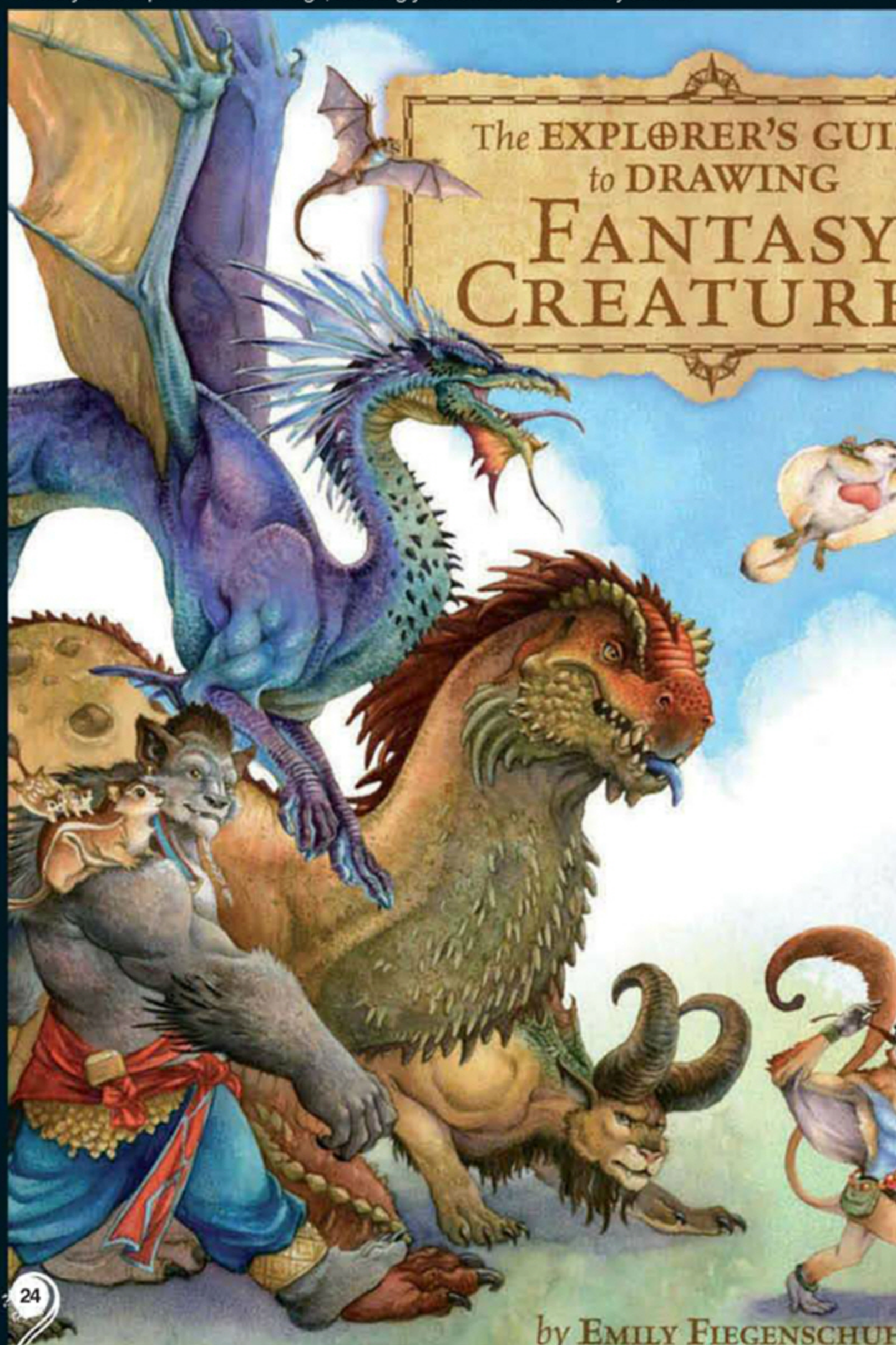
Once in Dalian, we were greeted by our Chinese guide,  
...Qian Mei Ling. Ms. Qian is a graduate student of the Wildlife  
...Institute of Natural Sciences as well as the leading resident  
...specializing in the care of the dragon Tong Long Hui at the  
...Bohai Dragon Sanctuary. She was assigned as our guide for  
...the duration of our stay in China.



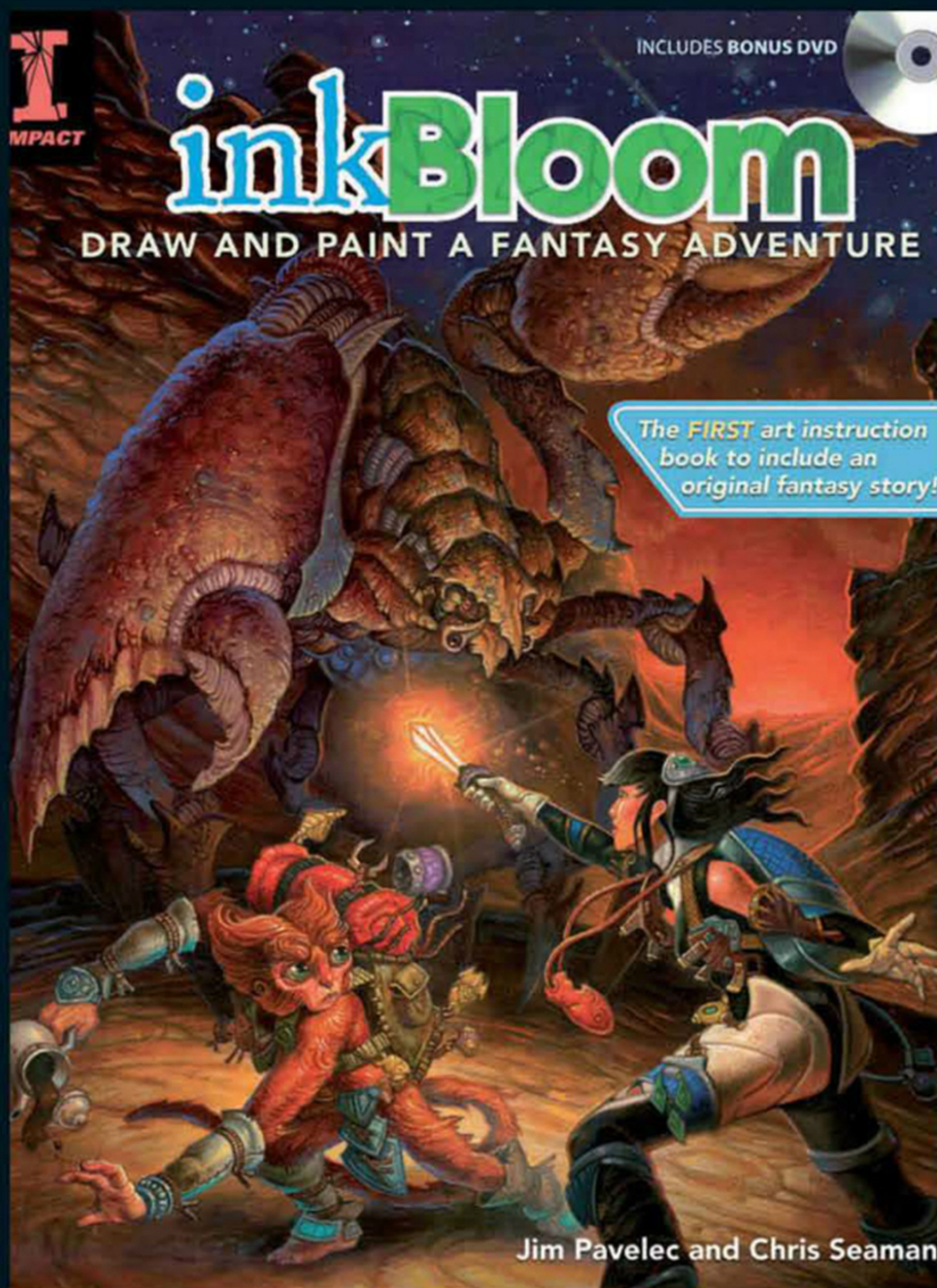
Our Tour Guide,  
Qian Mei Ling



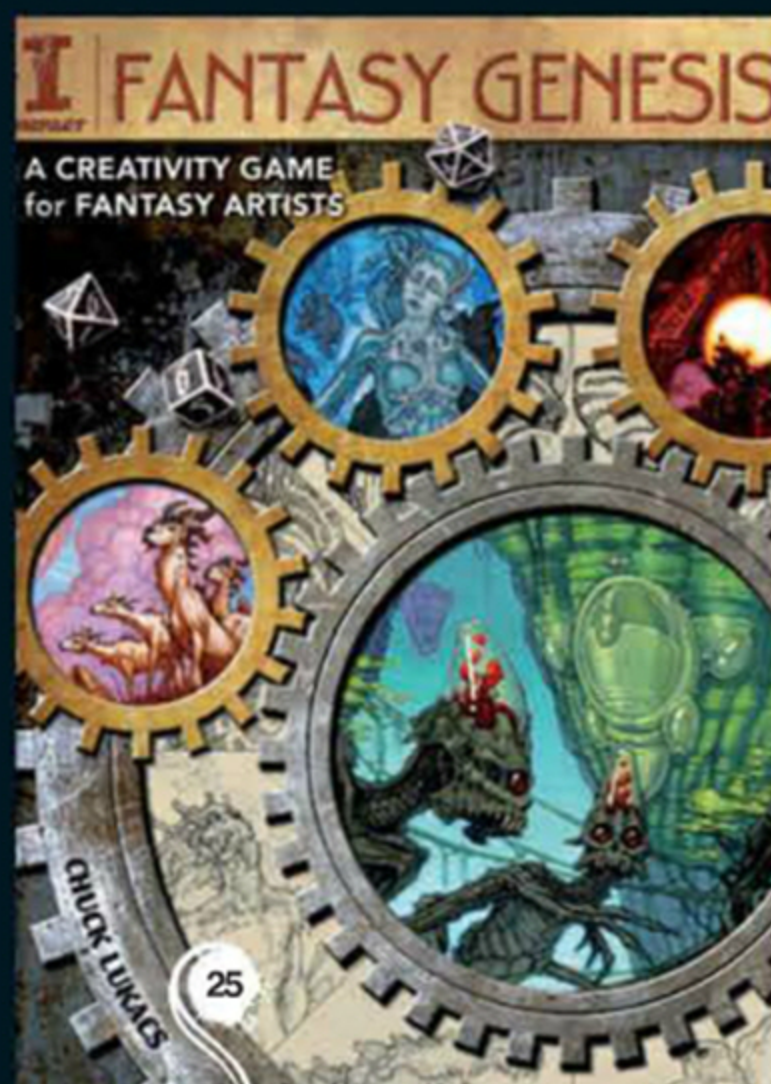
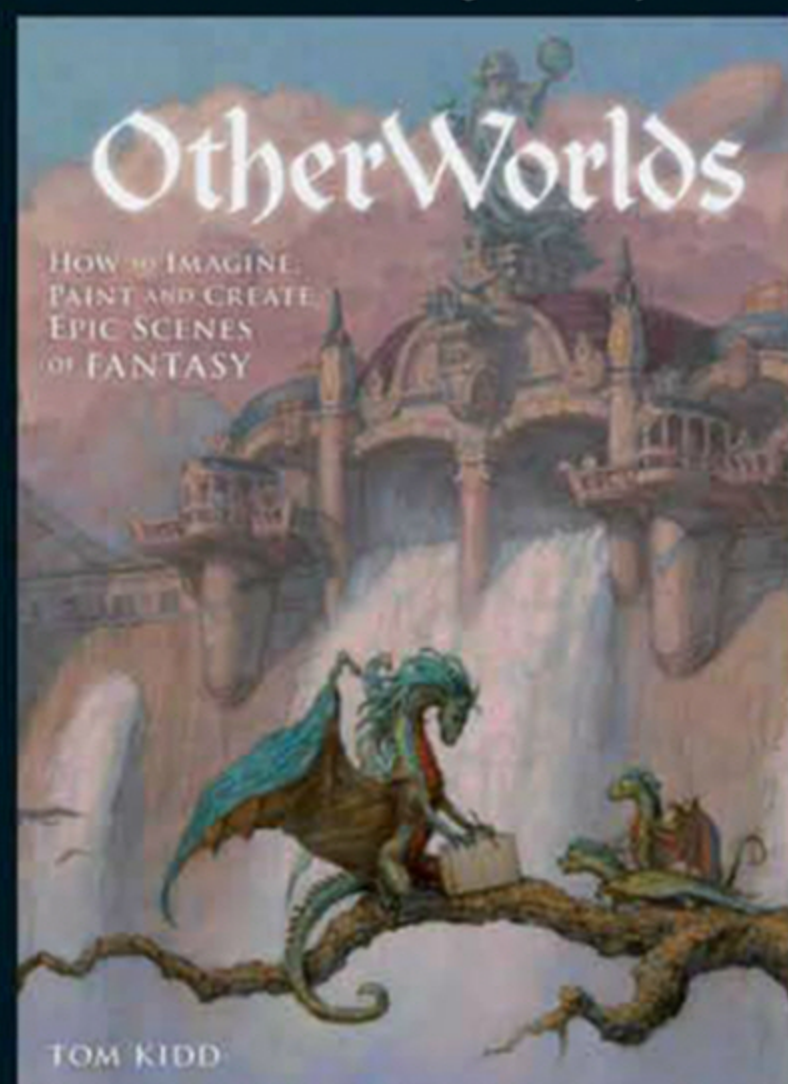
Many titles explore creature design, teaching you how to create fantasy animals



- F&W Media's titles are packed with creative advice for traditional and digital artists



- You can review a wide range of fantasy art books from F&W Media



- F&W Media's stable of creative authors include Gary Tonge and William O'Connor

## LATEST TITLES

Discover some of the latest titles that you could get for free

### Dreamscapes Magical Menagerie

£16.99/\$24.99US



- For traditional artists (and those who use digital variants on real-media techniques), Stephanie Pui-Mun Law teaches you how to paint magical creatures and their environments in watercolour.

### Dracopedia: The Great Dragons

From £17.99/\$26.99US



- Subtitled *An Artist's Field Guide and Drawing Journal*, William O'Connor's latest *Dracopedia* is packed with sketches, diagrams and tutorials on painting these majestic fantasy creatures traditionally and digitally.

### Shojo Fashion Manga Art School Year 2

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- Learn how to draw and colour shojo manga, a female-focused genre that concentrates on fashion, beauty and teenage kicks. Irene Flores and Krisanne McSpadden share their tricks.

## Readers' gallery

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### Featured artists



#### Ferdinand D Ladera

[www.digitalartistdaily.com/user/digitalhadz](http://www.digitalartistdaily.com/user/digitalhadz)

"I was trained in Manila and have a diverse background as a fine artist and photographer, specialising in fantasy. I'm a concept artist at LadyLuck Digital Media."



#### Enrique Fernández

[www.digitalartistdaily.com/user/enrique%20fernandez](http://www.digitalartistdaily.com/user/enrique%20fernandez)

"I'm a freelance artist from Barcelona. I have worked on the movie *El Cid* and published *Le Magicien d'Oz*, *L'île sans sourire* and *Les Contes de l'ère du Cobra*."



#### Gergely Gizella

[www.digitalartistdaily.com/user/loqartis](http://www.digitalartistdaily.com/user/loqartis)

"I have been working in web and graphic design for the past eight years. I paint digitally using a tablet for my work, but traditional painting is close to my heart."

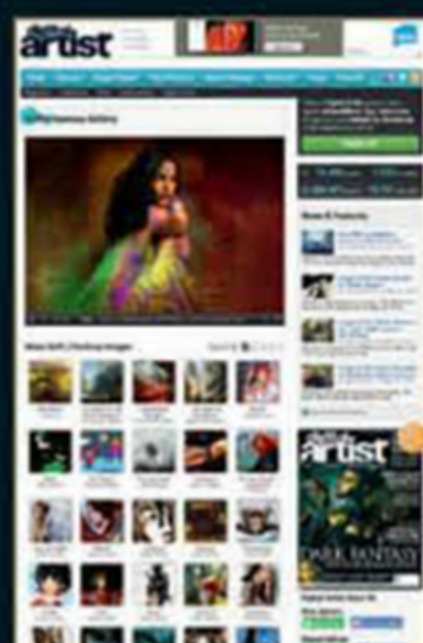


#### Gina Nelson

[www.digitalartistdaily.com/user/jiina](http://www.digitalartistdaily.com/user/jiina)

"I trained in-house with a local game studio and am otherwise self-taught. I've worked on several indie games, tech demos and illustrations and hope to continue doing what I love forever."

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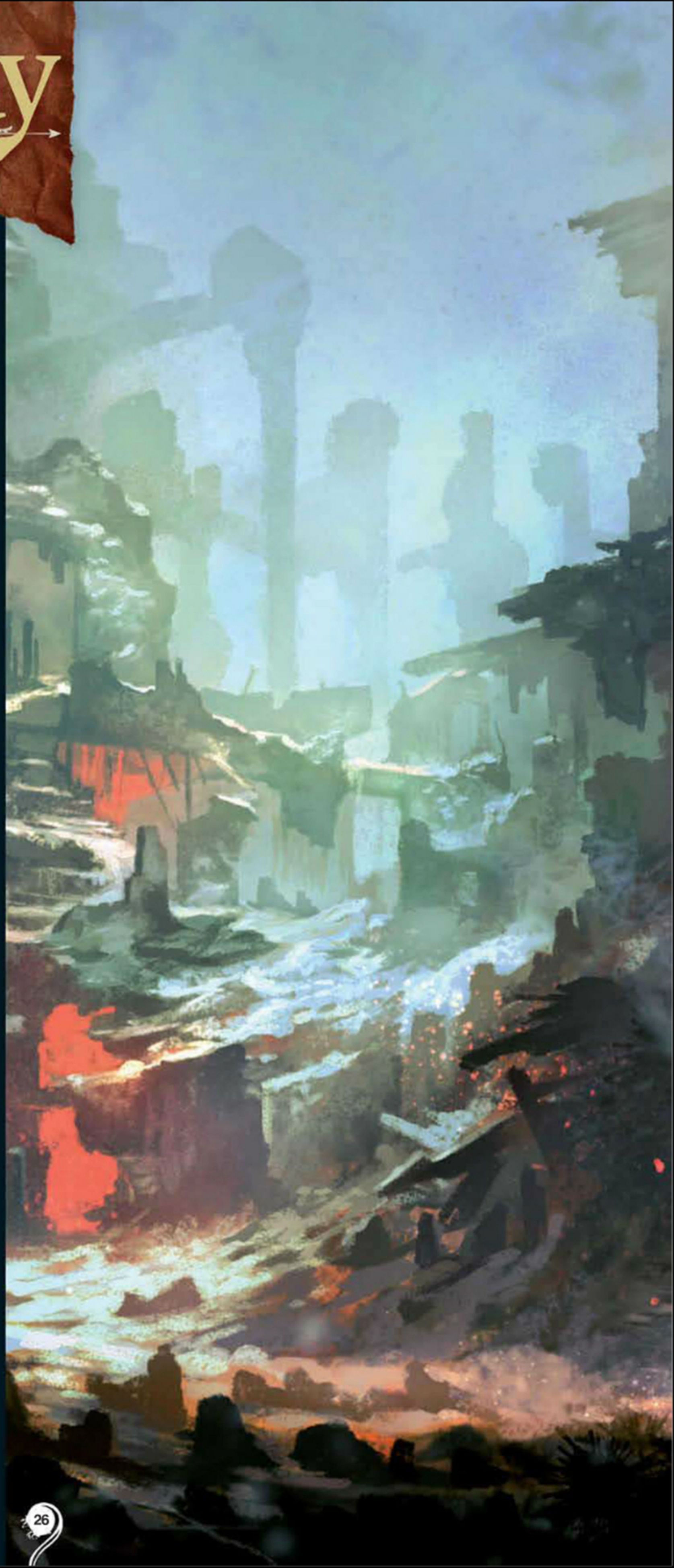
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“ Arthuluccio fled,  
surrendering the sanctuary  
that was reduced to ashes,  
determined to seek revenge ”



● Surrender of the Ashed Sanctuary, 2012  
Ferdinand D Ladera Photoshop

“Arthuluccio fled, surrendering the sanctuary that was reduced to ashes, determined to seek revenge on the people fighting the power of the Antisanti and lay upon them the rage of evil Narcisterrono.”

# Community





● **Brigada, 2012**  
**Enrique Fernández**  
 Photoshop  
 "This is a test pic I did for the comic project *Brigada*. The characters were already designed, but I needed a complete scene to show the relationship between characters, background and the whole mood."

● **Downtown, 2012**  
**Gergely Gizella**  
 Photoshop  
 "This image is one of the first concepts created for an upcoming stealth-style iPad game set in an alternate 17th Century in the Far East."

● **Ballerina Squad Concept, 2012**  
**Gina Nelson** Photoshop  
 "I started thinking about doing a project based around a specialised unit called the ballerina squad. This is the first of many concepts [that are based on] this idea."

To get your work showcased on these pages, create a gallery at  
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# Clothe and arm your characters

**Poz Watson** explores what the best-dressed fantasy characters will be wearing this season

Even the most ardent fantasy fan has to admit, it's a world full of well-worn tropes. And there's no area where this is truer than clothing. Wizards wear long cloaks and have long staves, bloodthirsty warriors have clinking armour and boy-band hair, while feisty maidens pose and strut in chain-mail bikinis.

Eve Ventrue's ([www.eve-ventrue.weebly.com](http://www.eve-ventrue.weebly.com)) summary of the fantasy cast list is perhaps more nuanced, but clothing still comes to the fore: "Dwarves carry huge axes, elves only wear dainty and filigreed clothes and are always fighting with bows and narrow blades, humans like shiny armour and swords, orcs always dress like feral beasts and so on." But with all the possibilities open to fantasy costume designers, why do the same things come up so often?

"In an illustration where you're portraying a moment in a story without the help of text", explains Andrew Bosley ([andrewbosley.blogspot.co.uk](http://andrewbosley.blogspot.co.uk)), "being able to read the moment quickly is an important thing. Some of these tropes can help with that. However, if we're lazy and rely too heavily on those clichés, it leads to bland and shallow characters."

The importance of clothing to character and the importance of character to the success of the project cannot be overstressed. Evoking the tropes is a perfectly valid strategy, and indeed it's necessary to use ideas that people understand in order to be able to communicate with them. As Matt Rhodes ([mattrhodesart.blogspot.co.uk](http://mattrhodesart.blogspot.co.uk)) says, "I think that as much as people may think they want something totally novel and original, what they really want is



"A king has to face the coldness of war in the setting sun... the armour around [his] chin and neck gives an individual look in relation to the classical medieval plating", explains Eve Ventrue, who painted Dusk in Photoshop in 2012



## The art of armour

Armour is certainly visually impressive, but intimidating the enemy is only one of its functions in fantasy art

The most important function of armour is as protective clothing for a warrior, allowing them to shrug off the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. Since people no longer wear armour in the street, research is critical into the various styles and types. "Just like most fantasy stuff", says Yigit Koroglu, "I think armour designs should be based on real armour and a bit of imagination should be added on top of it. If it's fully imaginative, [there's] a strong possibility that it [will] lack functionality."

Which metal to use is also critical. Gold, for instance, may look good for ceremonial wear, but it's fairly soft and wouldn't hold up against a serious battle or drawn-out warfare. Koroglu also wants to remind new fantasy artists that: "Metal armour cannot be worn directly on skin, so you need some layers of cloth, leather or even a chain tunic underneath."

## “Clichés come from the same place as the love of fantasy itself... wish fulfilment”

something meaningful and well made, so that's what I've been striving for."

Concept artist Bosley has designed hundreds of costumes, usually for well-established franchises. But, he says, recently he had an exciting opportunity "to be the first artist working on a new IP that takes place in a new world, and one of the first things I tackled were the characters. It was really rewarding to see that world unfold through the costumes and clothing of each different civilisation."

So, if you can't avoid clichés but you don't want to be ruled by them either, what can you do? "Take those tropes and twist them", says Bosley quite simply. "Combine them. If you're painting a wizard, giving him a staff will help sell the role quickly. And that's okay. Embrace the staff, but do something new with it."

This attitude of embracing tropes is good advice for all fantasy artists to bear in mind, because all of those clichés come from the same place as the love of fantasy itself: they're about wish fulfilment. Matt Rhodes explains: "We want to become one with the shadows as the expert thief, cut through enemy hordes as the

barbarian warlord, explore wild country as the swashbuckling ranger. When designing costumes in the fantasy genre... you have to lean into the wish fulfilment, not away from it."

Nadia Asserzon ([curlyhair.cgsociety.org](http://curlyhair.cgsociety.org)) says, "the challenge for artists is to make up [a character's] personality, and make him less shallow by adding details that can tell the viewer a story." And costume really is the key to storytelling. As Andrew Bosley puts it: "Costume has the potential to define whole kingdoms and worlds, if we allow [it] to. Think about Peter Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* films. Every character's costume is purposely designed to reflect the culture that character came from. The smooth, organic shapes in Legolas's clothes and armour are design elements mirrored in everything else elven. Seeing Legolas gives us a glimpse of an entire civilisation. The boxy, geometric patterns of Gimli's costume do the same for the dwarf world." And, as Asserzon adds, it's "a circle – the world is describing the character and vice versa."

Armour is one of the most challenging ways of clothing your character. Metal is a tough texture



Nadia Asserzon created Green Fairy for a weekly challenge on [conceptart.org](http://conceptart.org) in 2009 using Photoshop

to realistically reproduce anyway, but you have to give your character a suit that is both practical and impressive. Although the possibility for storytelling is huge (is this armour new and clean, or scuffed and blood stained? Is it serious protection, or more for show?), so too is the possibility for falling for perhaps the biggest

## Clothing cuts

Do you dare combine fur and metal? We explore the possible hits and misses

What are clothes for? They are to keep us warm, to protect our modesty, to tell the world who and what we are. Think of a king's crown, a wizard's robes and – outside the world of fantasy – the teenager's angsty, all-black ensemble. How much skin someone shows talks about their self-esteem, how expensive the materials are reveals their wealth and so on. Robes, which can be seen on men or women, and can stretch from dirty burlap rags to gold-embroidered silk, are one of the most interesting areas of fantasy clothing. They also often denote a character with magical abilities.

But of course, you need not look only to fantasy art and narratives for inspiration. There's a world of historical dresses, capes and cloaks, suits and skirts, hats and hairdos that can be explored, from the medieval to the modern. As Diego de Almeida explains: "What's [clear] to me is that innovation does not come from nothing, but comes from an arduous search [of] what already exists."



In *Melancholy*, Eve Ventrue tells a story with a dress, a headdress, a tilted head and a clasped medallion. Painted in Photoshop in 2011



◀ Sid is one of Nadia Asserzon's most recent pieces, created in 2012 using PaintTool SAI and Photoshop. He is "a fighting faerie, born with wings of different colours, and he feeds on fear and pain"

fantasy cliché of them all: babes in sexy but ultimately pointless armoured bikinis. For Eve Ventrue, "art always shows a reflection of society; therefore most warriors are male. Female characters are put into dresses [rather] than into armour and most of the time, they are (nearly) naked. I don't know whether this is because the most popular artists are men or not." For Diego de Almeida ([www.blackfoxst.com](http://www.blackfoxst.com)) the stereotype has led him to steer clear of drawing women at all: "Well, I like... to paint armour, but in some fantasy genres there is almost no armour on the female; because of this I prefer to work with male armour design."

Bosley agrees that all too often women in fantasy are: "Bikini-clad eye candy. I'm not sure if it's artist-driven or audience-driven, but it has always seemed like a lazy and slightly adolescent design choice. I'm of the personal mind-set that modest is hot too, so I try to prove that in my illustrations as much as possible."

Rhodes agrees, mentioning a photo of some female Israeli soldiers that was popular on the internet a few years ago because of how attractive – but covered up and competent – the women were. He says he "still thinks of that collection every time I design a female character. Don't worry about attractiveness. People are attracted to actual people. Just believe in your characters. Let them be real people and for God's sake let them dress themselves!"

Asserzon says simply that the "main audience of gamers being men, it's totally understandable that the less a girl wears, the better. I myself love painting sexy women and see nothing wrong with it." But the armour issue is not just a

question of feminism, or even fashion. Yigit Koroglu ([www.yigitkoroglu.com](http://www.yigitkoroglu.com)) explains that: "Female armour can have huge gaps of protection. I started to see people protesting about the functionality of women's armour, and I like this attitude because it means that people [are starting] to praise brains before breasts." For him, the real challenge when it comes to armour is to "have all the parts of the armour have the same [quality]. Sometimes the chest piece and pauldrons look really nice but the greaves and boots can be overshadowed."

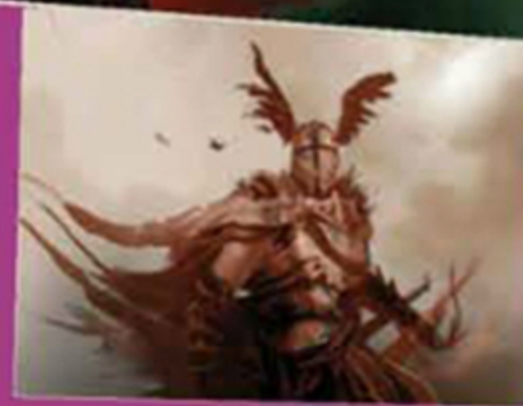
Ever shadowing the question of looking good – no matter how little the character is wearing – is the question of how well the clothing functions. As Ventrue explains: "When creating armour, the character should be able to fight with it, when creating a robe, the character should at least walk and sit in it. After all, art wants to create an illusion, and every illusion is beautiful [rather] than practical, but I try to stay close to reality and its requirements." For Asserzon, the level of practicality and detail depends on whether it's a one-off painting or a concept for something bigger: "I mostly [want] a character to look good and correspond with his surroundings (which makes him look plausible)."

“Innovation... comes from an arduous search [of] what already exists”

## Greyscale values

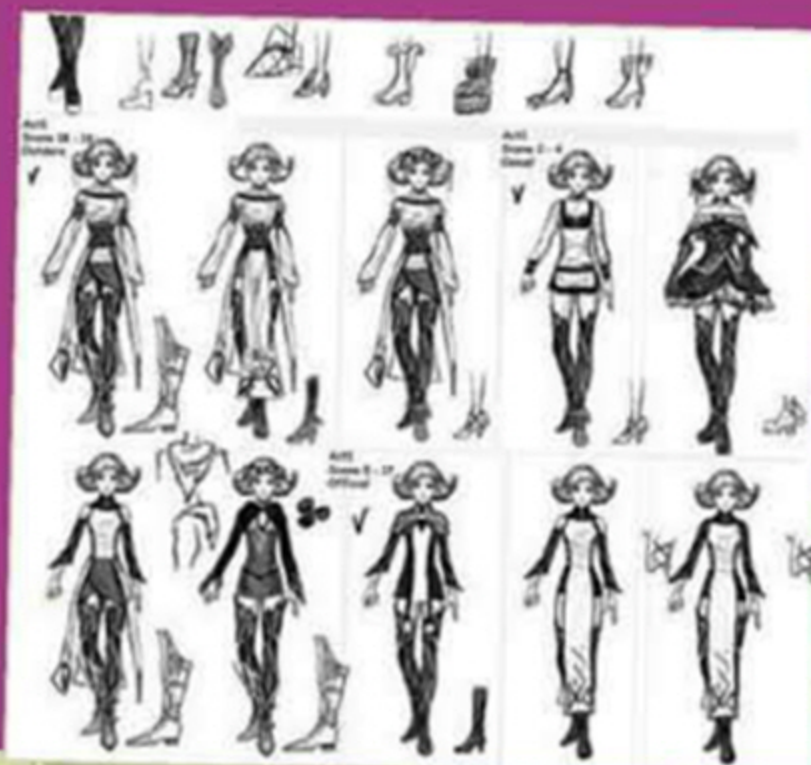
Brazilian artist Diego de Almeida explains that he creates armour as if it is part of the character: "As the character is visual, and as the illustration is composed only by one image, his personality is constructed by the elements that surround him. So more than clothing or protecting the character, the armour works as an extension of his personality and talks directly with the world that he lives in." His process is to go from rough sketch to rough greyscale painting because "it reduces the problems to be solved and you can focus more on values and design."

Guardian of Truth is a 2011 piece Diego de Almeida created for *Exposé 10*, using Photoshop



## Drawing duds and 'dos

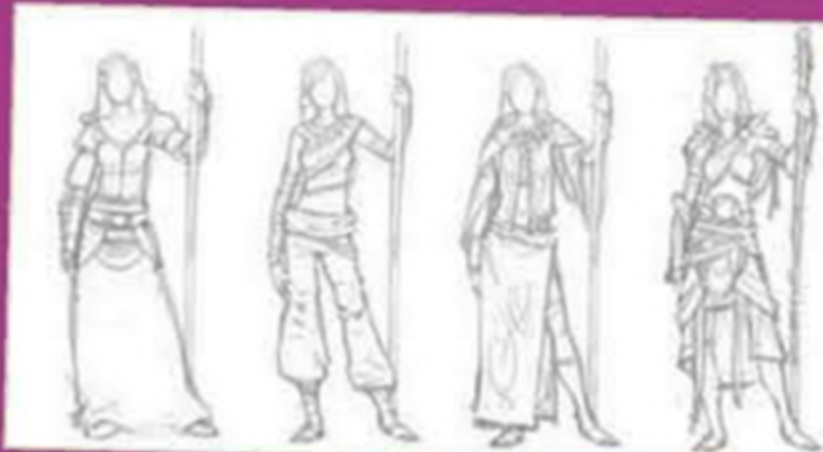
Shaylee is a faerie princess, created by Nadia Asserzon for a personal game project that is still in process. She needed to create several clothes sets for different occasions, so she spent a lot of time sketching alternative outfits and haircuts. Asserzon has no qualms about using hair and clothing (or the lack thereof) to make a female character appealing: "Some tasty parts of her will pop out, but she will also be an interesting character. I don't feel bad about female characters being sexy – I like to see fantasy dudes with exposed torsos or half-naked barbarians."



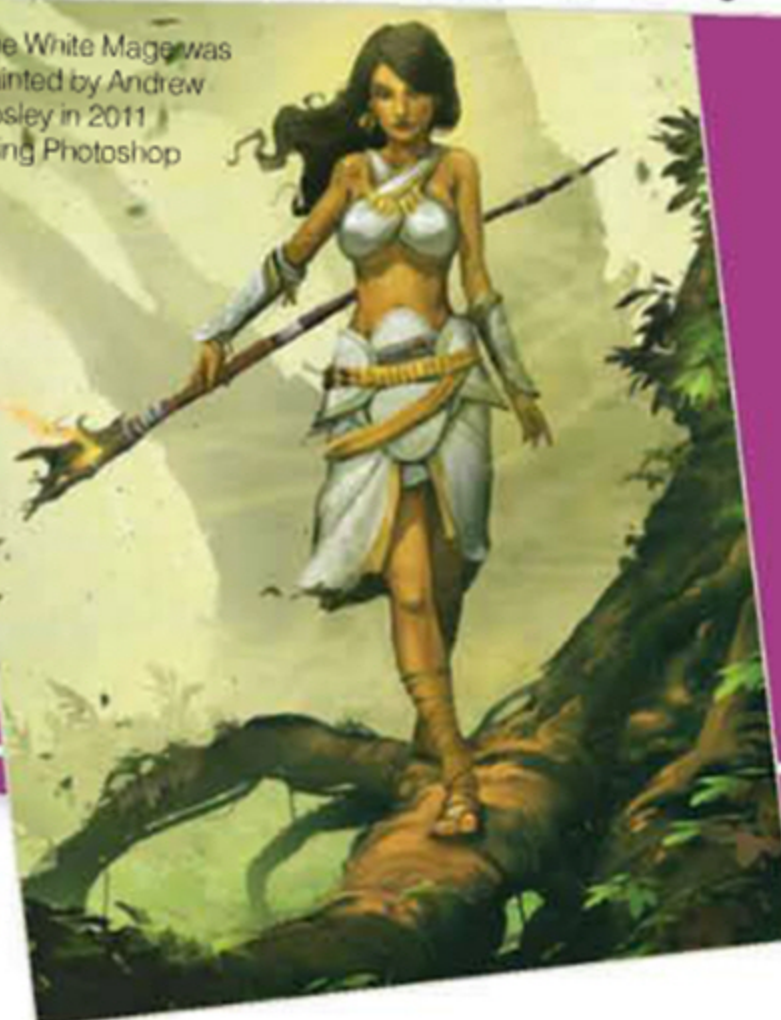
Nadia Asserzon created Shaylee in 2011 using Photoshop

## Make the magic happen

The mage is one of classic characters of fantasy, and here Andrew Bosley wrestles with the challenge of creating a female mage that is both fresh and feisty. "We all want the strong women in our illustrations to look attractive", he explains. "I don't think there's anything wrong with that. But the long-standing trend in the industry is to create female sex objects, devoid of purpose or depth."



The White Mage was painted by Andrew Bosley in 2011 using Photoshop



But if I'm going to make comics or a graphic novel in which this character is going to move, eat, fight and do a lot of other things that characters usually do, then I'd rather think hard about each detail of his armour and clothing. Is he small or big? Can he wear heavy armour? Or should he? Which weapon does he carry and how does it attach to his armour? Maybe he has a small pouch with healing herbs? Could he hide a knife in his boot? I just try to think: 'If I were him, what would I wear, what would I put in my pocket?' Every little thing."

"My core thought, my guiding light when actually sitting down at the desk to design anything, is economics", says Rhodes. "I mean

internal economics, as in: how much can this character afford? I believe that if you can answer this question then 75% of the costume is designed for you." Which materials could your character afford to wear is a great question to ask, as well as which materials they might geographically have access to in their country or fantasy world. "From crappy burlap to fine silks, saggy old worn leather to smooth and tailored doeskin, your materials say volumes about a person's current place in the world", says Rhodes. "How much is a king willing to invest in the lives of his soldiers? Look at their armour. How talented is that thief? Look at the quality of his equipment and the cut of his cloak."

And of course the materials that you choose can continue to work for you. Koroglu says, "reflection is your true ally. Nothing tastes as good as a shiny [piece of] armour reflecting the surroundings. That is, of course, situational. The only time you can see such shining armour is during times of peace or if the armour is magically blessed by some being. Adding effects like cracks, dirt, blood, rust and so on gives the impression of realism and makes the viewers wonder about the story of the warrior."

While fashion designers can use flesh-and-blood models to show off their designs, the illustrator has to rely on the static image. The challenge therefore is to make the character and its costume lifelike. To that end, Ventrue recommends a good brush palette. "There are about 30 brushes I only use for painting fabric, leather and metal", she explains. "I almost use the same technique every time I'm creating a special sort of material. By varying the combination of a few basic brushes, you'll get different results but you can keep your style anyway. In order to get a very realistic look, you can also add textures to different surfaces (rust, grunge, metal, stone and so on)." For Rhodes, it's all about layers, but not Photoshop ones: "I'll start with the base (usually just the shirt and pants) and then I'll mentally go through their

**"I'll reference... anything that works, from... theatrical to contemporary fashion"**

morning dress routine in my head. What do they put on and in what order? Do they bother with every button? Are they suspicious by nature and tuck a small blade away under a fold? Stepping into the character like this helps me design costumes that I can believe in."

The mistake that some newcomers to fantasy make is believing that as they're depicting an imaginary world everything can come from their imagination. In fact, research into historical armour, fabrics and patterns from around the world and through the centuries can be

enormously helpful. "I research costumes just about every day", says Rhodes. "There are very few costumes that I draw that don't start with a page of inspiration images. I'll reference just about anything that works, from historical and theatrical to contemporary fashion design." Bosley agrees, noting that: "Centuries of intelligent thought has gone into designing real armour and clothes for real people. Tapping into that knowledge will make your costume design more intelligent and believable." Rhodes goes further, stressing: "Designs that come purely

## Bring cloth to life

You can design the most outrageous outfit but give it oomph and the simplest of robes – as here – will pop off the page



**01 From draft...** Matt Rhodes starts with a rough sketch in pencil. Usually he does a few and then picks his favourite. Next he scans the thumbnail and inks it. "The inking stage is the most critical for me, as it will guide the rest of the painting", he says.



**02 ...to detail** Rhodes calls this "the most tedious phase, just blocking out all the flat colours." Even though the cloak of the standing figure is fairly simple and the other man is not wearing very much, there is still masses of detail in the staff, the jewellery, the armour and the sword.



**05 Final details** Now Rhodes does a detail pass, adding highlights and sharpening. He adds the rain and shiny puddles to contrast with the roughness of the cloak. For the final image, he adjusted the blue and purple colours down a little, and added a bit of green into the shadows.

**03 Materials matter** Rhodes doesn't always do this, but at this point he threw in some simple texture overlays. It may be "quick and dirty", as he calls it, but as well as making it easier to hit deadlines, it also starts to bring the clothing to life.



**04 Shine a light** Next Rhodes blocks in the light and immediately the shadows turn flat colour into undulating material. Rhodes explains: "I find it helpful to create layers that are brightened and colour adjusted to each light source, then mask them into the image."



I'm Done (2012) is a Photoshop piece of work by Matt Rhodes. The simple tilt adds real drama to the image

### GET THE LOOK

Be inspired, work out how clothing is actually constructed, or get help roughing it up – it's all out there



#### 1. Historic UK

[www.historic-uk.com](http://www.historic-uk.com)

Check out a section called Fashion Through the Ages to get a thumbnail sketch of how dress has evolved for both men and women.



#### 3. Elven Forge

[www.elvenforge.com](http://www.elvenforge.com)

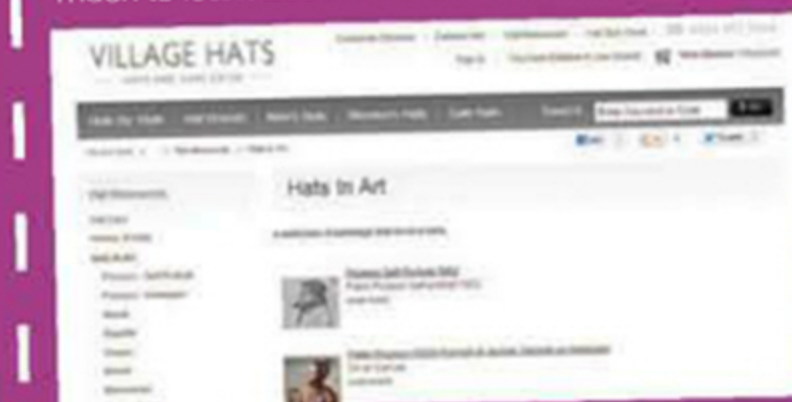
See what real armour looks like on photographs of real people, as this site sells real armour and displays plenty of pictures of it.



#### 5. Roman Military

[romanmilitary.net/tools/armour](http://romanmilitary.net/tools/armour)

This is a good source of information about Roman armour, and if you browse around the site there's much to learn about the rest of the Empire too.



#### 7. Hats and Caps

[www.hatsandcaps.co.uk](http://www.hatsandcaps.co.uk)

This shop has a fantastic section on the history of hats, including famous paintings with hats in them and a list of the more iconic pieces of headwear.



#### 9. TV Tropes

[tinyurl.com/fa-tvtropes](http://tinyurl.com/fa-tvtropes)

It's words rather than pictures, but there's much to enjoy (and learn from!) in the TV Tropes rundown of fantasy characters and their clothing.



#### 2. Antique Dress

[antiquedress.com](http://antiquedress.com)

Browse this shop and museum for a look at clothing, hats and footwear from 1750 to today. And you can buy it too, if anything takes your fancy...



#### 4. McCall

[www.mccall.com](http://www.mccall.com)

Try this site for a large range of easily browseable sewing patterns. It's all modern clothing, but it's still a great way to get to grips with how clothing functions.



#### 6. Samurai Store

[www.samurai-store.com](http://www.samurai-store.com)

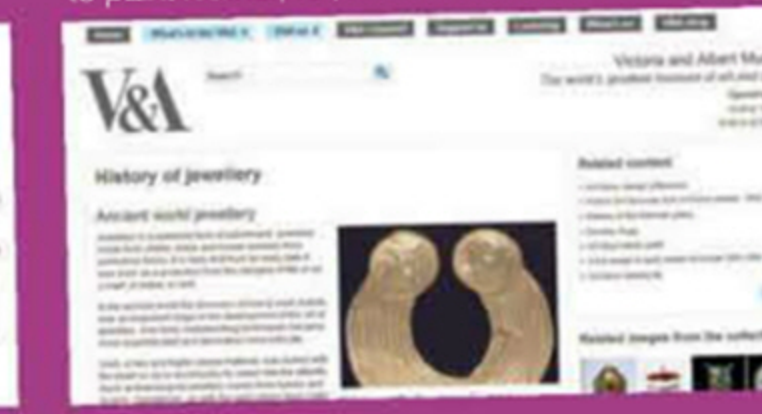
If samurai armour is more your thing, then obviously the Samurai Store is the place to go. The range of armour on sale is astonishing, and a little terrifying.



#### 8. Lost & Taken

[lostandtaken.com](http://lostandtaken.com)

Simply fantastic textures that are free to download, the Lost & Taken collection will improve your ability to paint leather, fur, metal, silk and more.



#### 10. V&A

[www.vam.ac.uk](http://www.vam.ac.uk)

Finally, don't forget to finish off your costume designs with jewellery. The V&A History of Jewellery will give you plenty of ideas.

A painting for a 2010 project that was cancelled, this is Executioner, created by Yigit Koroglu in Photoshop



from our own heads look terrible. Honestly. You can always see it. They're mushy, insubstantial, like plain mashed potatoes without any of the spice of truth in them."

Of course, your costume choices will depend very much on what they are for. "If your story is all about whimsy and surrealism you can probably get away with a lot", says Rhodes. "When it comes to believable, high-fantasy stuff... impracticality pulls you out of the story. If you don't design characters that look like they dressed themselves (or had servants dress them) then you're just calling attention to yourself as a concept artist." And if the costume is going to actually be worn by an actor, then the need for reality increases. "In the movie industry", says Koroglu, "the actors need to wear real products... So that reduces the possibility of armour being impractical." But it doesn't seem to reduce the number of fantasy women kitted out in bikinis. As Rhodes points out: "Once a few familiar tropes are established you can subvert them all you want, but I think that without playing to that common language, you're not going to hit that necessary 'wish fulfilment' aspect."

Entitled Gates of Sieghard, this image features on the cover of the book *Marenebrae* and was painted by Diego de Almeida in Photoshop



**CURSED CROWN**

Believing fashion to be "a mirror to the mood and nature of the world", Eve Ventrue's images reveal a pleasing complexity

*Be inspired*

This image reveals the influence of both Baroque and classical traditions, with Ventrue noting that she really likes "classicism and traditional painters like Sir Frederic Leighton or William Bouguereau, which really inspire me when I'm going to do a female dress."

*Light as a feather*

The big diaphanous skirt speaks of the character's fragility. "If I want to paint a royal female character", says Ventrue, "I'll probably choose semi-transparent fabric, filigree and embroidery. It's always a matter of a character's class and environment."

*Swirls of the world*

Despite its faintness, the detail on the princess's dress is a crucial part of the design. This might be a hard world, but rich women are still pampered. Ventrue warns: "Don't dwell on details until you have created (or at least reasoned out) the whole design."

Clothe and arm your characters

*The tracks of her tears*

Entitled Cursed Crown, this image shows a princess "facing the curse of her heritage", according to Ventrue, and "the royal coat reveals her state." But costume isn't the sole storyteller of course, with her pose and tears expressing this tumult too.

*Weighing in*

In contrast to the dress, there is heavy fur and velvet, both swamping and trapping this princess. "Of course, it's important to use different materials to get nice contrasts within your design", says Ventrue, "but you have to find out for yourself what will look good in the end."

*A wolf at your door*

Despite her finery, the princess clearly lives in a world where protection by wolf is necessary. "The worlds that I create generally contain cold and muted colours", says Ventrue. "Dark colours reveal a harsh environment that require strength and willpower, and always mean loss and sorrow; bright colours indicate hope and fragility. I like to play with both sides, giving every character [an] individual touch and story."



# Tutorial

Magical character design



# Magical character design

**Chester Ocampo** shows you how to create believable faerie artwork

Battle Faerie

*Photoshop*

## CHESTER OCAMPO

Artist info



[chesterocampo.net](http://chesterocampo.net)

Chester Ocampo is a freelance illustrator based in Manila. His commercial work is comprised of print illustrations, concept art and art direction for videogames. All of his illustrations are created using digital software, but his mind is all analogue. For now.

Popular depictions of faeries portray them as dainty, delicate and innocent creatures, but we are going to show you how to put a little twist on the well-loved and much-repeated appearance of this fantasy staple. To make a tough-looking faerie, let's start by placing her in the natural world, where real dangers from predatory animals abound. Whether forest or hedgerow, when you're as small as a faerie, lots of creatures are huge and dangerous! So our faerie has to be not only defensive, but aggressive as well in order to survive in her surroundings.

Envision your faerie wearing clothes and using tools made out of natural materials gathered from her environment. For her armour she uses a rhinoceros beetle's exoskeleton bound with spider silk. Extra costume details are semi-

translucent petals (hinting at their magical nature) fortified with lizard-skin bindings. Her weapon of choice is a spear made out of a jay's feather, with the tip of the quill sharpened out to fend off enemies. She has gathered all of these materials from the creatures she's slain, similar to the way ancient human hunters used animal bones and skins for their weapons and armour.

Her nemesis in this piece is a bat – a normal-sized bat by human standards, but monstrously large to a faerie. To tie their relationship closer, the faerie's wings are patterned like a tiger moth's – regular prey of bats in the real-world food chain – and the scene is taking place in a honeysuckle hedgerow, where tiger moths usually lay their eggs. These real-world elements are integrated into the fantasy scene to convey a sense of scale and how tiny our feisty heroine is. We have an idea of how big bats, leaves and flowers are, so placing her alongside these familiar elements provides visual cues to measure the fictional faerie.



# Paint a battle faerie

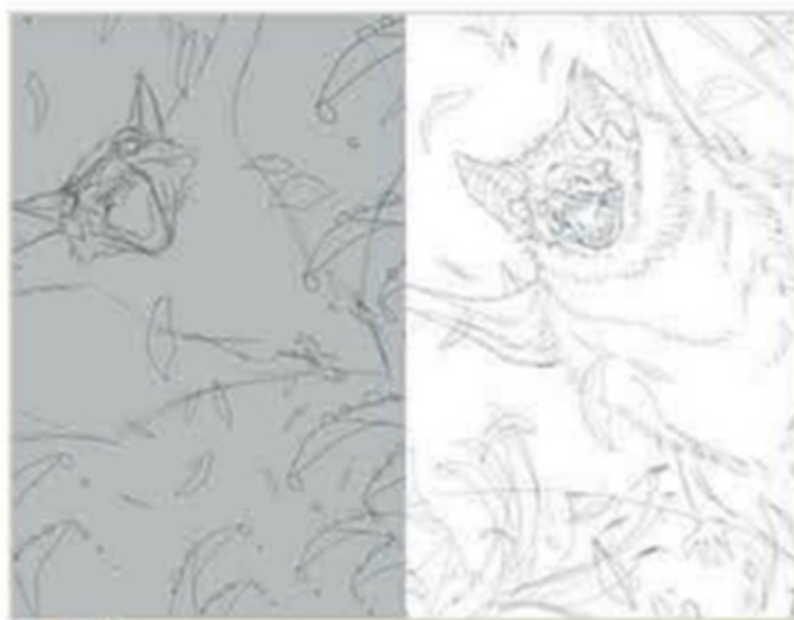
## An unconventional faerie in 25 steps

**01** **Thumbnails** With the concept of the subject and the scene in mind, it's time to compose the image using quick, small sketches. The thumbnail sketch shows the general location of all the objects inside the image as well as body language, pose and overall mood.



**02** **Other studies** It's best to create alternative sketches to choose from. These offer a different take on the image (or specific elements) that might be considered for production into a final illustration.

**03** **Fix proportions** Having chosen a thumbnail sketch, it's time to clean up that sketch into something more detailed. The accuracy of anatomical proportions, foreshortening and perspective should now be present in the piece.



**04** **Use references** For this particular illustration, the accuracy of scale and detail for real-world objects (the honeysuckle flowers and the bat) are crucial in communicating that the faerie is smaller than a human being. References are important here, to make the real-world objects – and, by extension, the faerie – look convincing.

**05** **Rough sketch** The rough sketch is completed and checked for possible changes. At this stage, the image can still be tweaked fairly easily. Revisions can be made quickly and details can be added or subtracted without wasting hours rendering a final image.



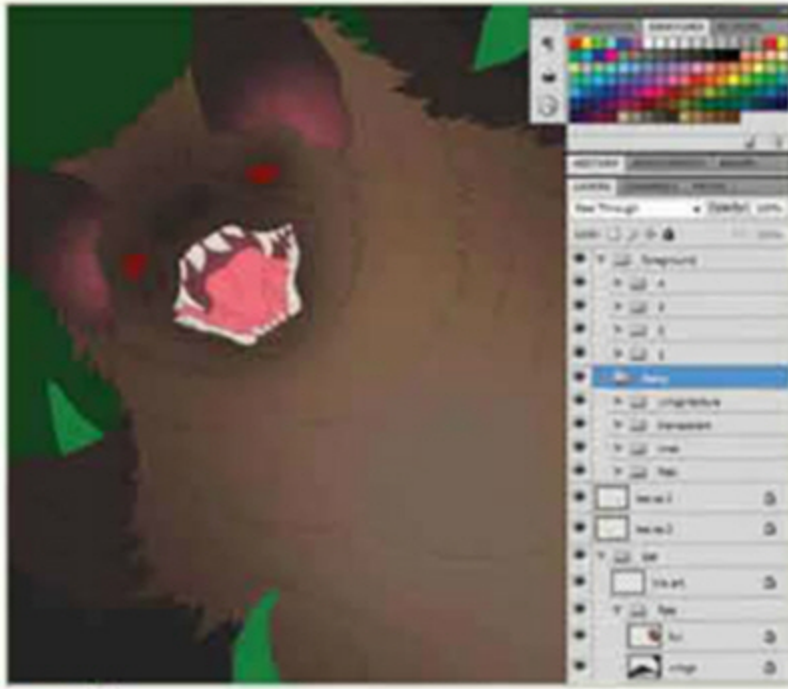
**06** **Line art** The rough sketch is now processed into final line art. During this phase, you should fix any mistakes and define any obscure details for clarity. Keep some parts of the line art on separate layers so that you can fix them without disturbing the other finalised parts.



**07** **Colour flats** Next up are the colour flats, where patches of colour are assigned to objects. Each patch of colour is contained on its own layer for easy access during the subsequent stages.

## REFERENCE WORK

Whether you're working with a photo-realistic painting style or an exaggerated cartoon style, reference images of specific objects are useful to create convincing illustrations. Just be careful how much of the reference you're putting into the artwork; remember that you're drawing an illustration, not shooting a photograph.



**08 Group the line art** Group the layers according to the object they belong to. For example, the faerie's line-art layers and her colour flats are grouped as one. This enables easy access for applying special effects later in the process.

**09 Determine the light source** Based on the thumbnail sketch and the mood you are aiming for, pick the location, direction and intensity of the light source. For this illustration, the light source comes from the upper-left area (out of frame), shining down into the scene at a 45-degree angle. It defines the contours of the faerie's limbs and wings, as well as the bat's snarling face.



**10 Colour palette** Since the scene is taking place amid vegetation, the background elements are predominantly green. In order to make the faerie stand out, her skin and costume details must be complementary to this. Costume details that are green must be in a different shade entirely to avoid confusion with the background colours.



**11 Define values** Based on the intensity and angle of the light source as well as the mood of the image, the light and dark areas of the illustration are mapped out in greyscale.



**12 From dark to light** The sinister bat is covered in darkness, with only the highlights on its face and edges of its wings to give it form. The faerie is bathed in light, with bounce light underneath reflected from the flowers and vegetation below her. The values work hand in hand with colour, to separate one object from the other and create the mood of the image.



**13 Rough lighting** Using a soft round airbrush, quickly paint the light and shadow of the objects on separate layers stacked above the colour flats layers. The light layers are set to the Screen blend mode while the shadow layers are set to Multiply so that they now show through on the colour flats.

## BACK IT UP AND DUPLICATE

If you have the disc drive memory for it, it's recommended that you save your artwork as a new file after each major bit of progress during production. You never know when the next computer malfunction will happen, so it pays to be ready instead of having to start from scratch.

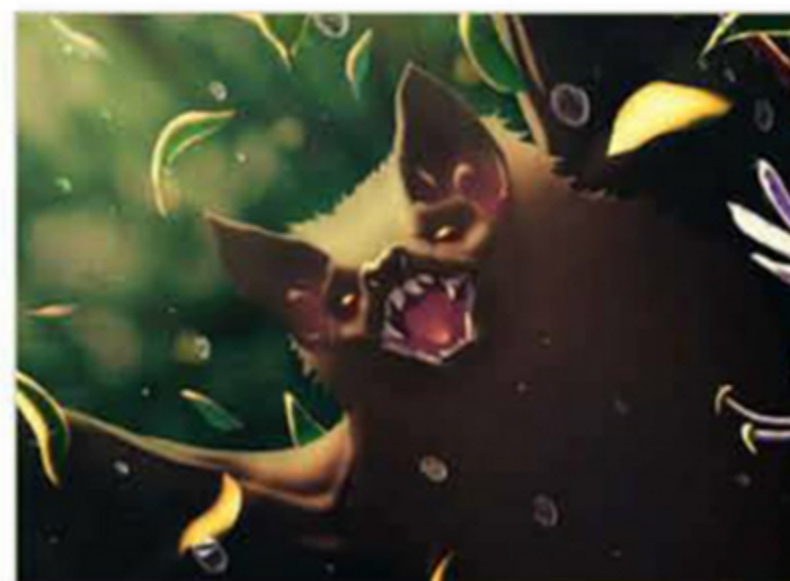


### 14 Adjustment layers

While adjustment layers can be applied to the image during the final stages, they can also be used earlier too, in this case to lock down the mood right away and ensure that this is preserved in the illustration's final form. Try using a Brightness/Contrast layer to tweak the richness of colours from the foreground to background elements.

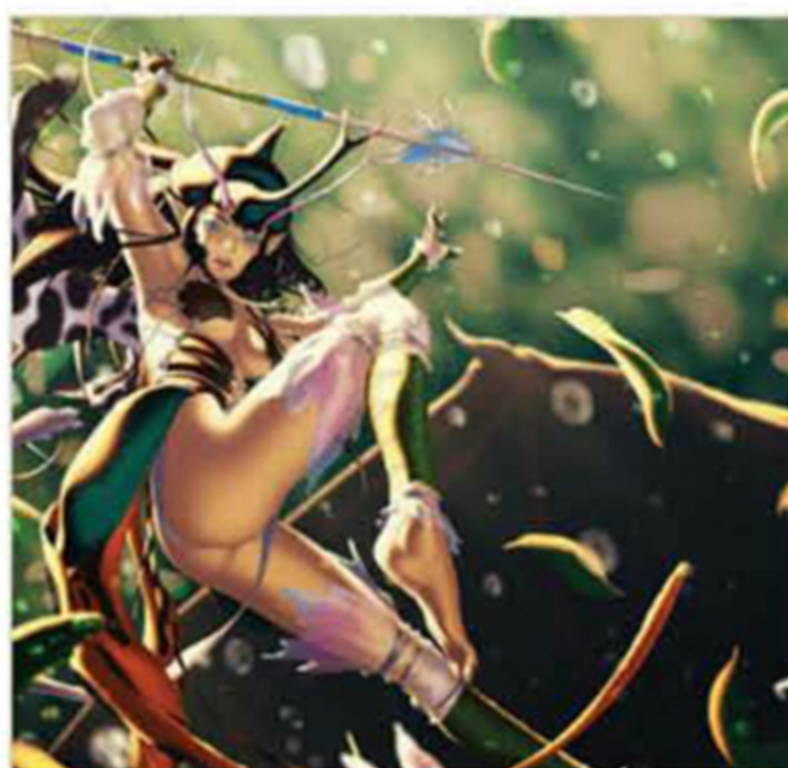


**15 Test render** We want this illustration to look similar to macro photography, so make a quick test render of the depth-of-field effect. Assuming that the faerie is the clearest object in your image, apply blur filters on the foreground and background elements, increasing the intensity relative to their spatial distance from the faerie.

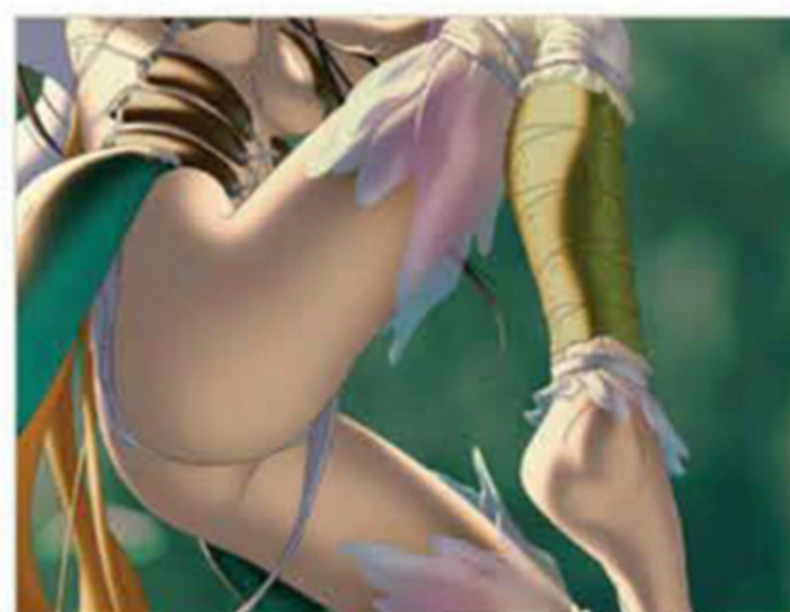


### TRY AND TRY AGAIN

Trial and error is time consuming, but experiments often yield surprisingly good results. At the very least, failed experiments will teach you what not to do! If you've got time, experiment with painting techniques, software capabilities, composition and subject matter. It will keep your mind open to what's possible with your art.



**16 Trial and error** This test render will give you an idea of what the final image will more or less look like. Create more test renders until you settle on the filter settings you're satisfied with.



**17 Colour blending** Merge each of the grouped layers into single layers and turn off the visibility of the adjustment layers. Colour pick from the merged layers and paint on top of them with a low-opacity brush to soften or sharpen the transitions between colours, depending on the object's angle and lighting in the scene.



**19 More shadows and highlights** In the deepest corners and crevices of the object's forms (like the inside of a fold or the firm contact point between two objects), paint additional shadows. On surfaces that are reflective and receive a lot of exposure to light (both the main light source and bounce light), paint additional highlights.



**18 Refine painting strokes** Zoom in on specific areas of an object and refine the shapes of each element based on how the light is hitting it. Paint curves or corners on certain areas, varying the softness and sharpness of your strokes to really ramp up the detail.



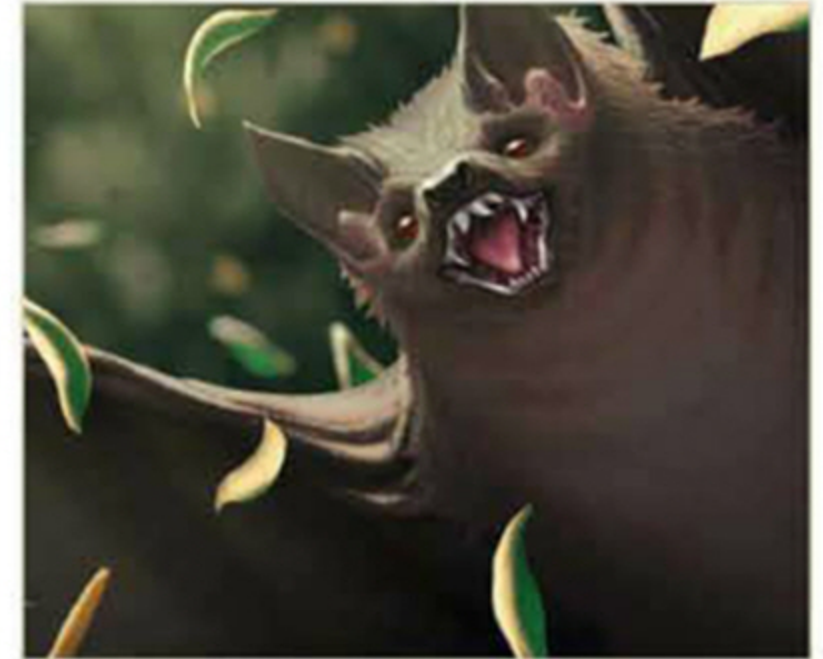
## Texture and detail

Finalise your image with technical touches



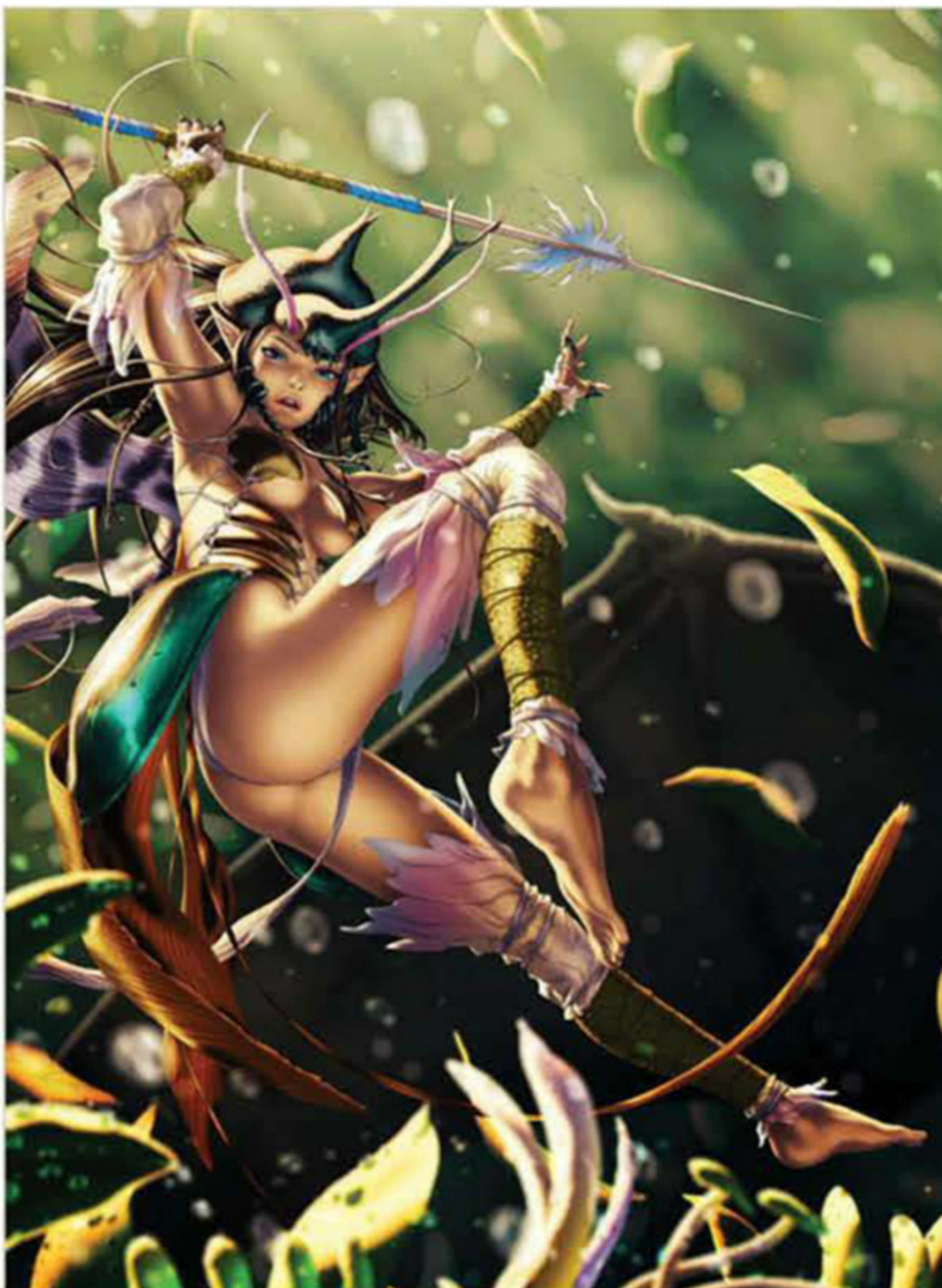
**20 Add texture to material** Based on the costume materials you want, paint their respective texture on the objects in your scene. Apply highlights according to the main light source. For this illustration, the individual lizard-skin pores catch light in the same way that the rest of the faerie does.

**21 Paintovers** Using a small brush, render the finer details of your subject. The combination of refined painting strokes, additional shadows and highlights, and textures of materials result in a better-defined subject. The angles, forms and depth of the subject, as well as its individual elements, are clearly modelled and understood.



**22 More detailing** The same method is now applied to select objects in the foreground and background. With the blur special effects in mind, only a few foreground and background elements need be rendered in sharper detail (some leaves and the bat).

**23 Special effects** Based on the special effects render during the early stages of the illustration, the same filters are applied on the foreground and background layers. At this point, these layers are as good as completed.



**24 Colour correction** Make one last pass on the colours of the entire image, and then carry out some minor adjustments on the specific colours of the faerie and bat. The hues of some elements increase in saturation, while others are subdued to create colour harmony and direct the viewer's attention where necessary.



**25 Finishing touches** Make final tweaks and corrections on your most important elements, in this case the spear's feather and the faerie's antennae. You should also make minor tweaks all over the image, cleaning up stray strokes and sharpening details.

# Paint sci-fi action scenes

**Mauricio Herrera** demonstrates how to bring dynamism and action to your sci-fi scenes

← Alien Mecha Attack

*Photoshop*



### MAURICIO HERRERA

Artist info



el-grimlock.  
deviantart.com

I have been painting digitally and working in the genre of fantasy for 20 years, always trying to bring it a traditional look. Comic books, movies and videogames are my greatest inspirations, and I particularly enjoy painting creatures.



When starting an action-packed image, one of the best things that you can do is to make a gesture sketch. Gesture sketches are quick drawings, taking no more than five minutes, that don't focus on being accurate but on capturing the mood and essence of a person or scene. This is particularly important when you want to create action in your painting because the lines and compositions you draw when you do quick sketches are full of energy themselves. You will need to have a clear idea of your scene – what characters it is going to include, what they need to be doing and so on – and a rough idea of how it will be composed. Once you know this you can put pencil to paper (or pen to graphics tablet) and see what happens!

With some basic gesture sketches down you can start to work one or two up in more detail. Again you shouldn't focus too much on the really small touches now because what you are doing is looking for the shapes, angles and forms that add interest and life to your painting and working on building those up.

As you finish working up these basic sketches you will start to find a balance between substance and form, shape and negative space – a compositional

rhythm for your image. This might mean you want to move in a slightly different direction than your original composition plans, but that's fine. Go with your instinct in these cases because your eye will tell you if something is unbalanced.

In this image we see a group of alien robots invading an ordinary street. This could look flat and boring, but because of the interesting shapes and angles a lot more life is added to the scene. The big robots are perfect for practising your gesture sketches and building up negative space because they're quite jaggy. Start with them and use stick people to find the rhythm and patterns that make the piece feel energetic and dynamic. Then you can build your drawing and finally paint over it.

### AUDIENCE PERCEPTION

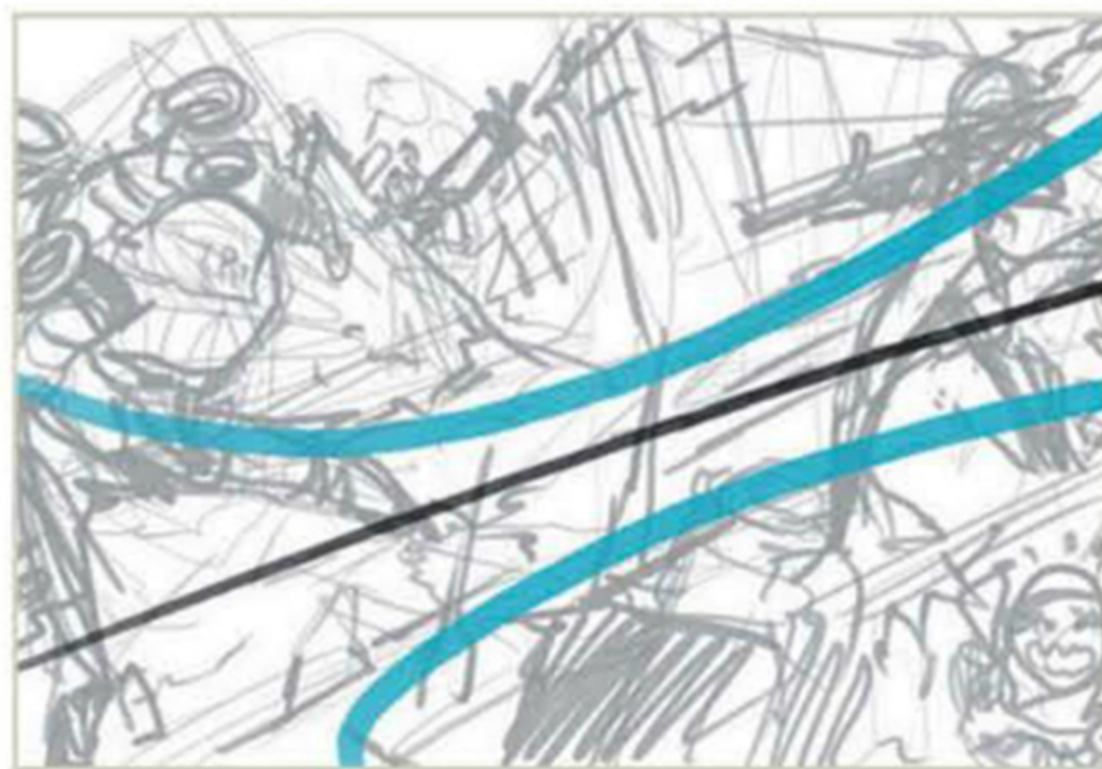
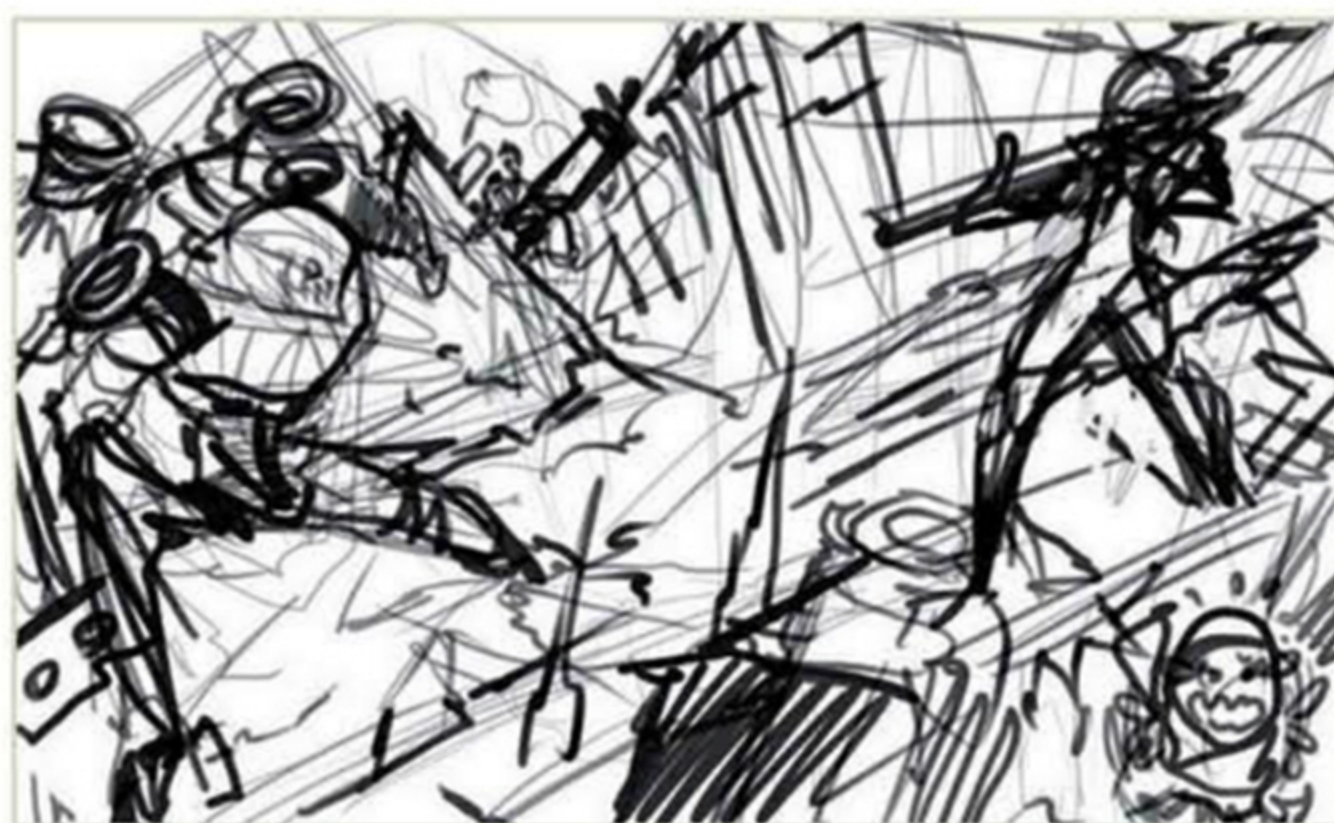
Include contrasting complementary colours if the audience is younger and avoid neutral tones unless your audience is adults. The first option helps the eye take in the focus instantly, while the second is better for more complex content.



## Jump into action

Start from gesture sketches and work up to your action scene

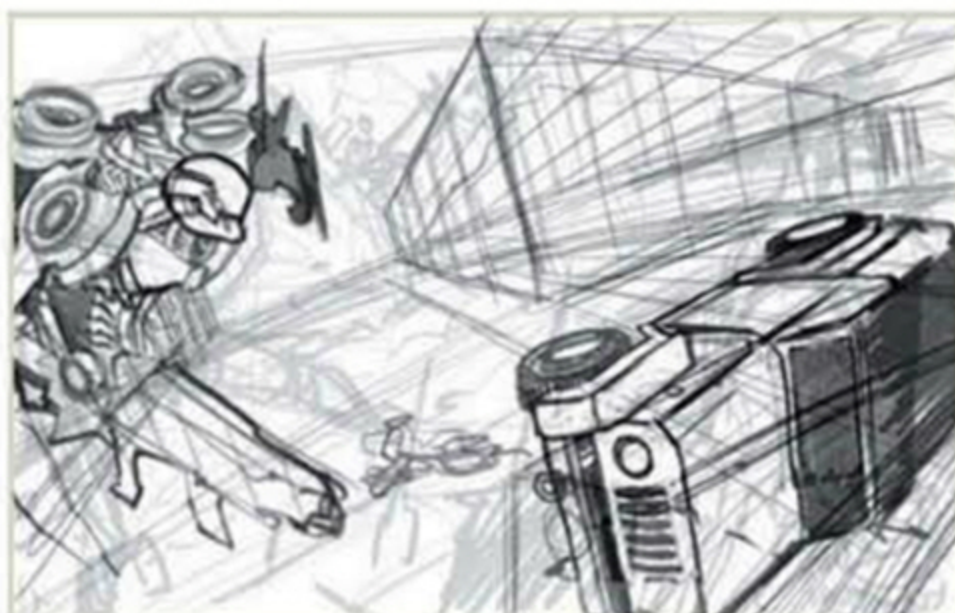
**01 Quick sketch** Use extremely fast lines to sketch roughly and get a sense of the general concept. The contours and shapes should be defined and suggest some poses for the characters, and the inclination of the horizon should be clear.



**02 Behind the sketch** The basic composition so far includes a tilted horizon line and two ovals in dynamic perspective, one in the sky and one on the ground. Try to place the characters and elements as you work up the detail without breaking this basic layout.

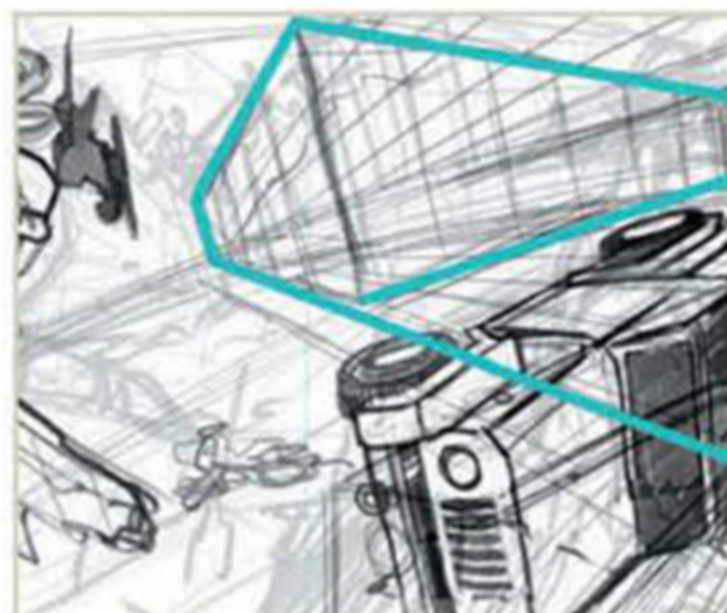
### 03 Define the elements

Define two important elements and the area they occupy. Here the large mecha in the foreground on the left and the upturned car on the right create a balance of form and substance.



### 04 Define perspective

Perspective is important in an action scene as it tells us how close we are to the action itself. The house in the background gives us a reference for size and scale while providing a guideline for the vanishing points.





**05 Mecha character** Create a robot design that is interesting and define its forms and structures. The helmet and face of this design is inspired by Japanese mecha, while the rest of the body is closer to Western industrial designs.



**06 Separate sketch zones** With the basic idea for the robot fleshed out, we can now start to look at the composition overall (the big robot will lead the eye so it's best to plan your key elements along this line). Here it's balanced, with the girl mirroring the mecha's position, but the image retains a dynamic angle for the action-packed theme.



**07 Basic colour** Rough out ideas for the colour. Strong, saturated hues add to the vibrancy of a scene while complementary colours help it hang together harmoniously. Blue and orange are the best candidates for this because they belong in the scene – blue for the clear sky the mecha are flying out of and orange for the explosion.



**08 Shapes at war** Something that can help you to imagine the composition is to imagine the shapes themselves fighting each other. It sounds odd, but when you work it up you should be able to see the lines of tension and force between them.

**09 Balancing sides** Now concentrate on balancing the image in a more formal way. Plan mini points and counterpoints to reinforce the main ones – here the young boy and the flying mecha provide the secondary rhythm.



**10 Girl and rocket launcher** The female character must not only be attractive, but also reflect the drama. She should be seen as a dangerous opposing force in this battle. Our character is a young woman who has picked up an abandoned rocket launcher to defend the small boy hiding behind the car.

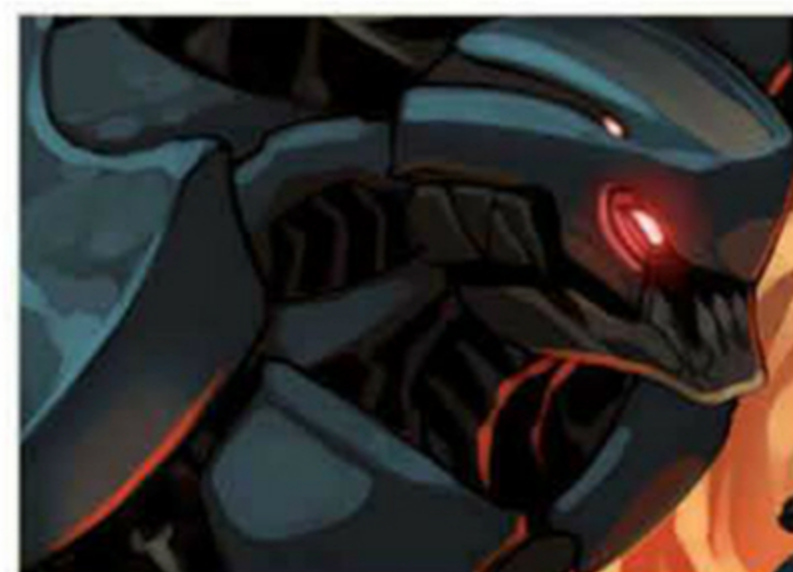


**11 Silhouettes** Now you've worked up some more of the characters and the basic design, create a layer of silhouettes. You can review the poses to see whether they're effective and, if you're happy, use them as the base of your painting.

**12 Paint with light** On a layer in Normal mode above these silhouettes, paint over areas that would be naturally highlighted. The line art isn't too detailed, so you can improvise small items when necessary. Many people prefer to do this first in light grey, but working in colour is also an option. However you prefer to work is the best way for you.



**13 Transition value** Below this layer, make a new one set to Normal mode at 50% Opacity and paint only the shadow areas. Use the same colours from the layer with your highlights; they will seem darker because of the opacity. This technique is similar to cel shading which is used in animation.



**14 Simple and clean** Add shape and volume now using very simple tools, such as basic gradients between your lights and shadows. Flesh out the structure and elements, but keep everything flat with no atmosphere at this stage.

**15 An intense sky** Ask yourself what time of the day it is, as this will dramatically alter both the lighting in your image and the sky where the lighting comes from. This scene is early evening, so a basic evening sky is painted in roughly.

**16 Metal** Bright or dark areas of metal can actually show different textures. Experiment with effects on light and dark parts, using several layers to blend. The light of this robot's glowing eye is created with a circular gradient on an Overlay layer.

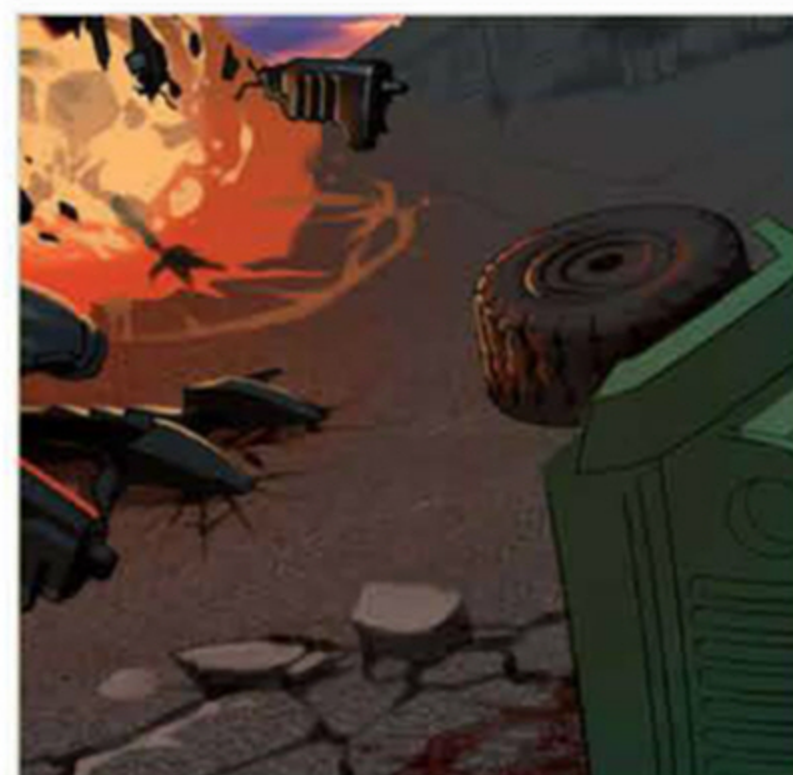
**18 Rebound lights** Place some textured soil to reinforce the sense of perspective and then focus on defining the space of the scene with light and shadow. A bit of warm light from the explosion rebound would hit the side of the robot, the wheel and the underside of the Jeep.

### SKETCH PERFECTION

Make more than five quick sketches with different composition options, then reduce them in size and paste into a letter format to view and compare them. This helps you make sure that you choose the best option.



**17 Refine the explosion** The explosion is still just flat shading, so in order to get across the idea of the exploding robot effectively, scatter the various blown-up parts out in concentric circles.





**19 Alternate tasks** It's good practice to move around your image concentrating on little bits at a time, as this helps build up the overall scene in a balanced way. Start working around foreground details now to build them up, like the Jeep and the metal of the girl's rocket launcher.



**20 Texture on metal** Texture metal surfaces such as the Jeep with brushes applied on a layer above the others. This layer should always be set to Overlay for a more realistic effect, and the brush tip settings can vary according to the desired outcome. In this case, the marks are made to look like threads of oil paint in a dry-brush style.

## LEARN NEW TRICKS

Train your eye to see common points in the work of different painters, for example the way their composition works or how they use particular colour harmonies for particular effects. Start doing this with a favourite artist, then try it with other artwork you look at.



**21 Background shading** The houses at the back have less contrast because they're further away. This enables us to keep the focus on the characters. Remember, though, that the light that describes their shapes must be consistent with the more detailed areas of the painting.



**22 Explosion and smoke effects** Refine the stroke of the explosion, adding fire and smoke by the rocket launcher. Add blue streaks to show the propulsion using large gradients on an Overlay layer and then adjust the effect and choose the best shade of blue to fit the image.



**23 Context** Refine the details in the central foreground area, for example the boy's bike. Abandoned in the street at the centre of the image, it provides context for the action – the boy was riding it five minutes ago before the attack. Saving it until the end makes sure you get it right!

**24 Final details** With all of the elements in place and worked up, concentrate on making sure that they all have the same level of detail across the image. Work in sections with the foreground first and make sure everything that's on the same plane of the image has the same amount of finesse.



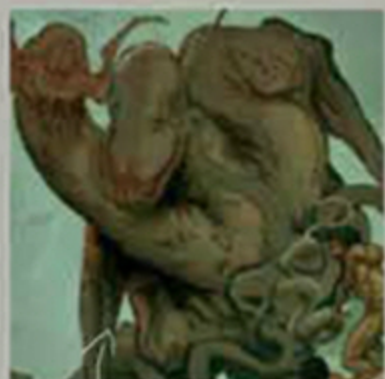
**25 Background tweaks** Review the colours and contrasts, make sure the background fades away properly and add any special effects. Try partially blurring, adding some depth of field, sparks and fiery embers or even bokeh lights to make the image feel more dynamic.

# Creature-based action scenes

## WORKING PROGRESS



Step 04, Composition



Step 08, Basic colours



Step 14, Brighten highlights

**Ken Barthelemy** shows you how to create a dramatic creature and the human heroes who stand up to it

Monster versus Hero

*Photoshop*

The first thing you need to do in an effective monster-versus-hero action scene is to flesh out the composition. In order to do that effectively you need to understand the characters and creatures within it. The creature is the eye-catching element of this kind of painting so it's important to have a good idea of what it will look like before you begin. How big is it? Where does it live and what does it eat? Is it diurnal or nocturnal? Is it based on a mythical creature, a prehistoric one like a dinosaur or an extrapolation of a real-world creature? Having answers to these questions will enable you to figure out how your creature should look, move and behave.

In a scene with a human fighting a monster, we have to ask ourselves why the fight is occurring. And the only way you can tell the reader this is through the stance and behaviour of the two protagonists. Again, figuring out the creature's behaviour before you begin will give the fight a back story and help you enormously. A creature that feeds on human flesh, for example, will be attacking viciously. A shy, non-predatory creature may be defending itself from human attack instead.

The behaviour of your creature will also give you an insight into the behaviour of your human characters – you'll know whether they're hunting and actively seeking out this beast, for example, or whether they've been attacked and are defending themselves. With the basic idea of who your characters and creature are and why they're fighting, you've got the ingredients for a vibrant fantasy piece.

## ON THE DISC

Join in the fight with character and creature sketches

## KEN BARTHELEMY

Artist info



[theartofken.com](http://theartofken.com)

I've been working as a professional freelance artist for nine months now but I started painting when I was first able to pick up a pencil. I'm simply a detail freak.





## Set the scene

Build thumbnails and find references



**01 Scribbles** Start your scene off by scribbling diverse body parts and creating many thumbnails. You can do this quickly and bring all your spontaneous ideas to the paper. Usually, I use a pencil or a Copic marker for this job. These drawings should be ready in a few minutes or even seconds, so they shouldn't be too detailed.

**02 Reference photos** In order to create a realistic and plausible effect you should know the anatomy of different animals. Search the internet or books and look for reference photos of different animals such as alligators or snakes. One thing in particular that these photographs will tell you is what the skin texture of the creature should be like.



**03 Pencil sketches** Create more detailed pencil drawings which show the bone structure of your monster. In the case of this image the creature has no eyes, groping with the long tentacles it uses to catch its prey. The more you prepare your illustration, the more believable your concept and illustration will look afterwards.



**04 Composition** The next important step in the process is to find a good and dynamic composition for the illustration. Once again, create different thumbnails, which, just like the scribbles, shouldn't be too specific. These thumbnails will show you how the final illustration is going to look.



**05 Pencil template** Draw each character separately on the paper to make it easier to select and place them on different layers when it comes to working digitally. Scan and then bring them into Photoshop. The sketches are like guidelines and will make it easier to colour the picture later on.

## SEE THE LIGHT

On a separate layer, draw small directional arrows in the corners to help you see where the light is coming from and where the shadows lie. That way you never lose the orientation of the lighting.



**06 Combine images** In Photoshop, use the Lasso tool (L) around the parts you want to combine for the complete picture. After that, select every layer, Ctrl/right-click and choose Convert to Smart Object from the list of options. This puts everything into one main layer.

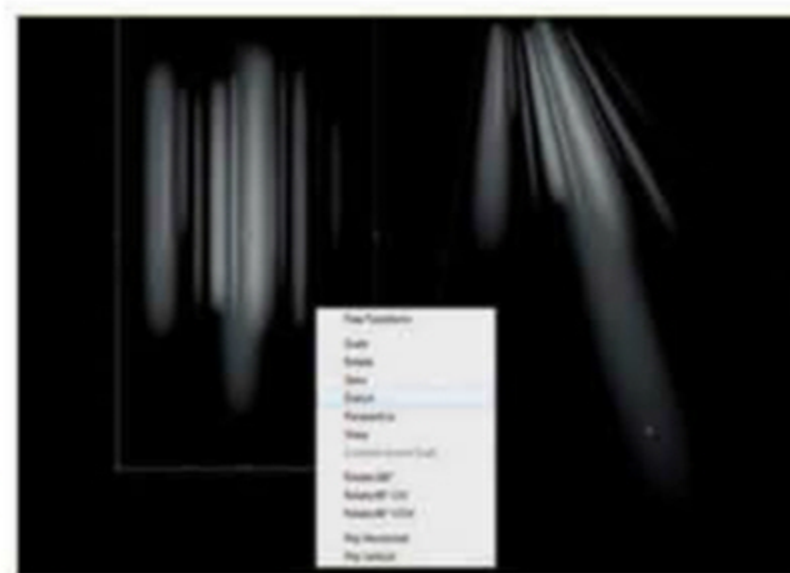
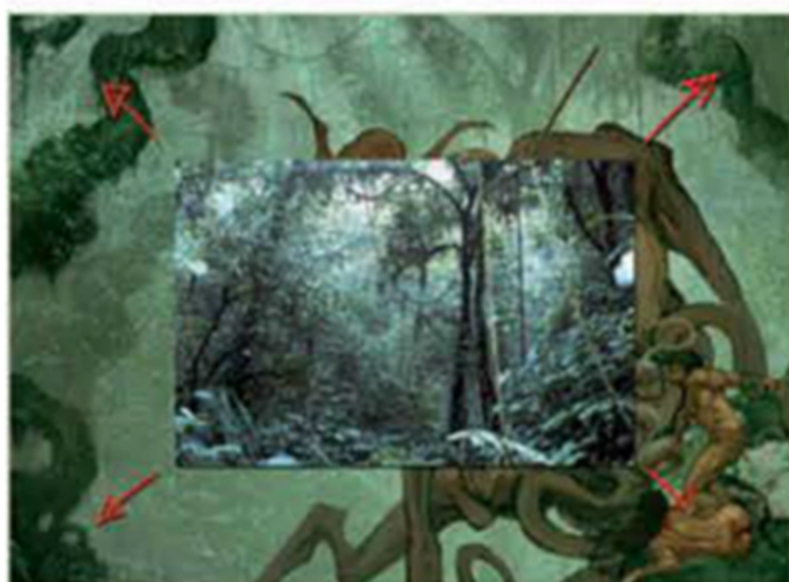


**07 Greyscale** Once you're satisfied with the composition, start painting in the values in greyscale. This lets you map out the lighting of the scene and gives the flat sketches a sense of depth. Put your sketch on a Multiply layer so you can just see it and shade on another layer underneath.

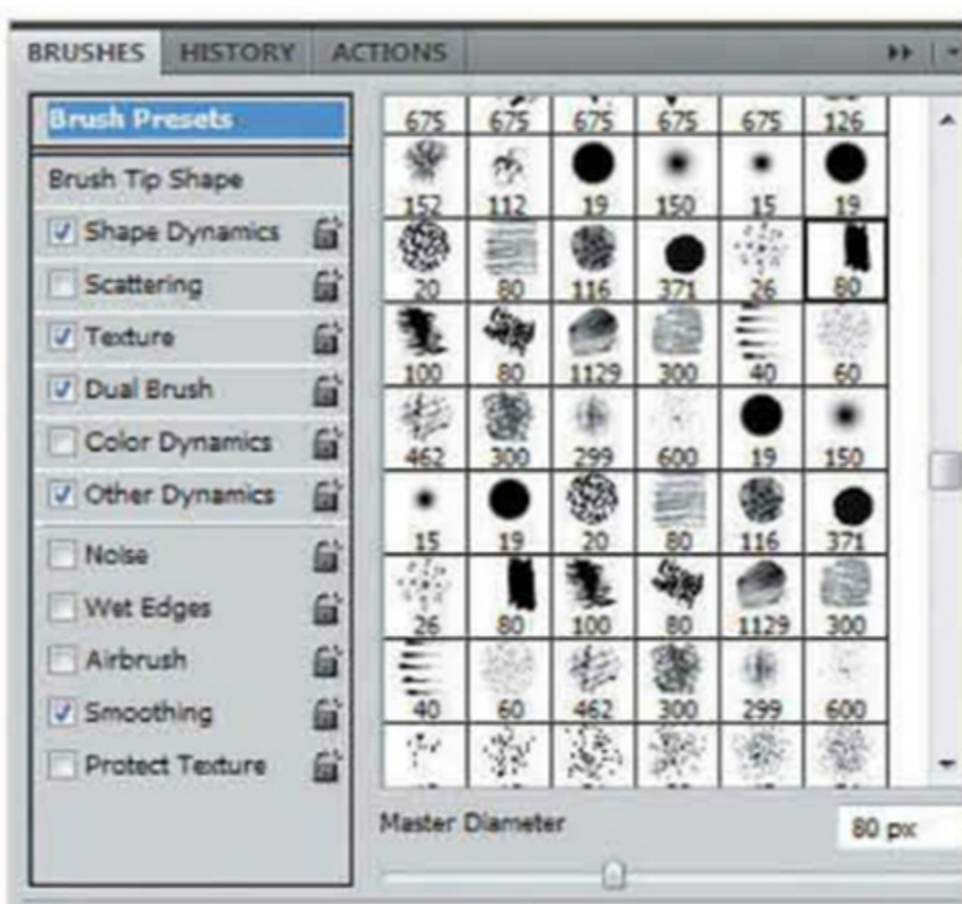


**08 Basic colours** Now it's time for one of the most important steps – the colouring. Here it is vital to set the right basic colours because the picture is built up from this palette later. Create a new layer in Color mode and start painting in some hues.

**09 Background** For the background, put a stock photo of a jungle over the whole painting and change its layer mode to Soft Light. Adapt the opacity of this layer a little so it's not going to contrast with the rest of the picture too much. This will give the piece a nice texture. Later we will paint over the top, so this photo is only a basic ground.



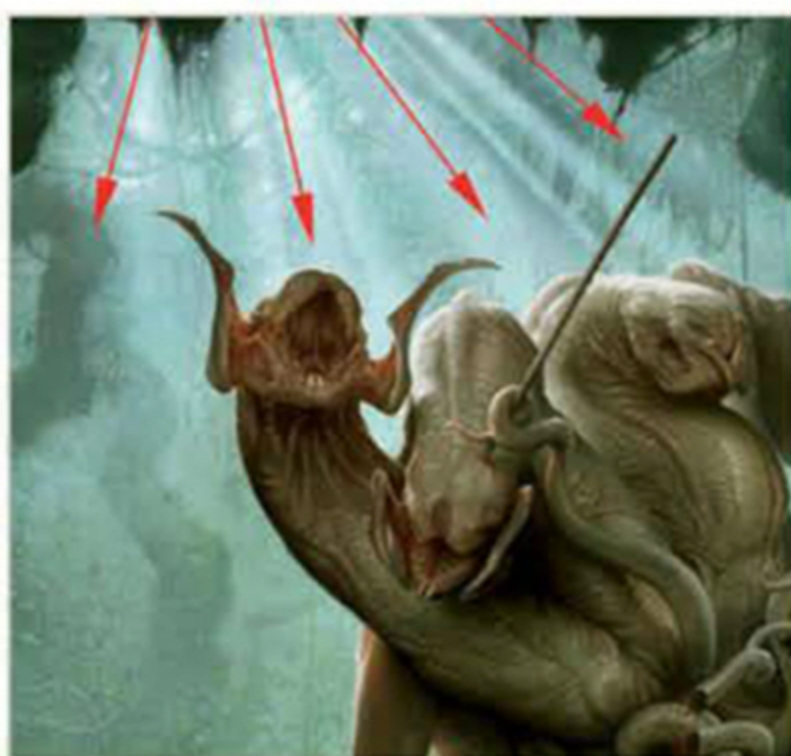
**10 Light rays** To create the effect of the rays of light piercing the forest canopy, create another layer and draw several straight lines with a soft brush while holding the Shift key. Use different lengths and heights for variety. Now select them using a Marquee tool (M) and change the perspective via Distort. Alter the opacity for realism.



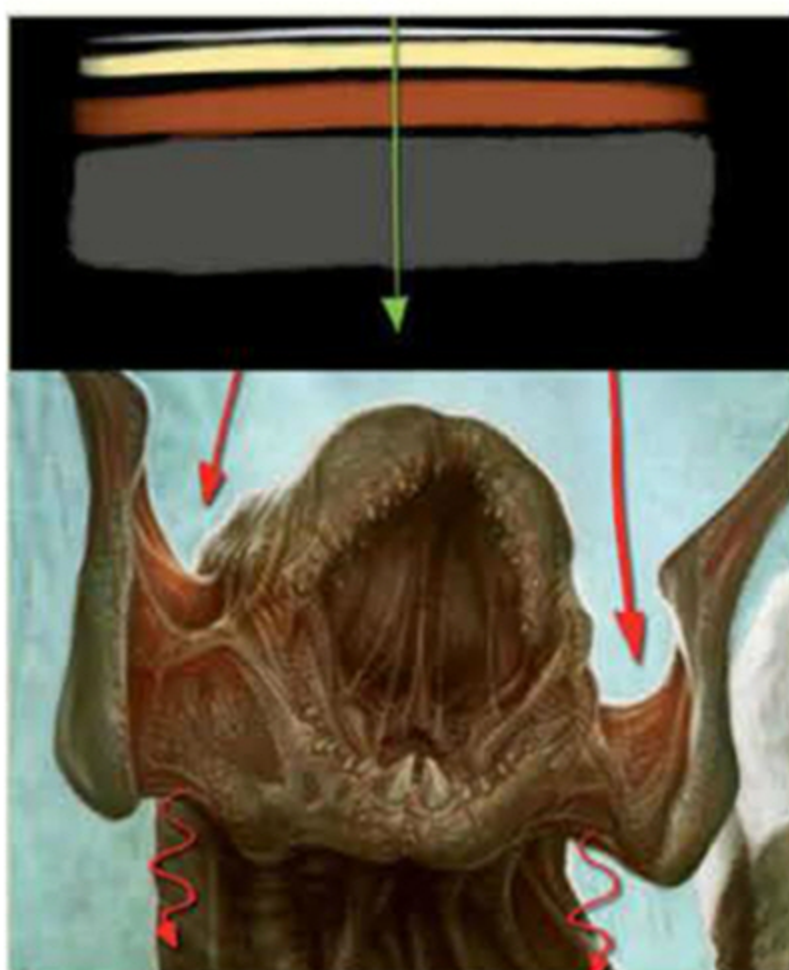
**11 The right brushes** The style of oil painting is really effective for monster illustrations, and you want to get as close to this as possible digitally. In order to get this effect you have to carefully select the brushes. I use some of Mike Nash's brushes; he offers a lot of fantastic tips on his website that you can download for free ([www.mike-nash.com](http://www.mike-nash.com)).



**12 Amplify the picture** Create a new layer in Normal mode and draw on top of the other layers to build up the scene. Don't paint too many details. This step is more about the ambiance, lighting and shade. Don't zoom into the picture, either, instead, keep a full view of it. Use the Eyedropper tool (I) to sample colours you've used, lightening them a bit if necessary.



**13 Rim light** Paint the rim light on a separate layer. The light source is very strong in this picture, so paint hard white lines. Creating a rim light like this will make the creature stand out much more.



**14 Try some subsurface scattering** Subsurface scattering describes how light enters a translucent material and exits it at a different point, creating a dappled or shimmering effect. Keep this in mind throughout your brushwork as it gives the skin a realistic look and makes it appear a lot more vivid.

## WHOLE LOT OF LAYERS

Always use a lot of different layers because that way if you make a mistake you can very easily correct it without erasing other important parts of the painting. Of course, you need to balance this against your computer's resources, otherwise it'll slow down.



# Shading and detail

Complete your scene with accuracy

## 15 Shadows

Respect the light and shadow sources, otherwise the picture will look like a bad collage. In this case there is one big light source. Most of the body parts are covered in shadows. Make sure the shadows are not too hard or strong. In this case the object looks more realistic with softer shadows.



## 16 Details

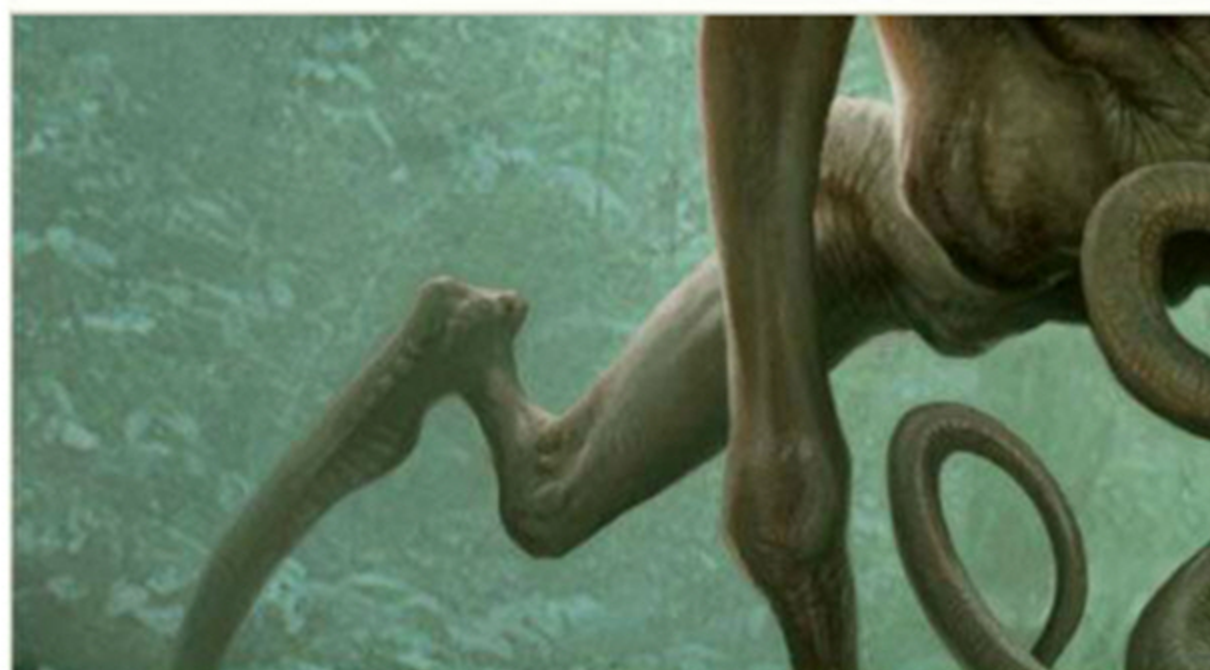
Details give the picture a realistic look, but it's important that the details always fit into the picture – too many can work against you and actually destroy the realism. The painting must act as a whole! If you draw a lot, you develop a feeling for this balance with time.



## 17

### Depth

To create a greater sense of depth you should paint fewer details on objects that are far away in the background. Instead, aim for the effect of fog for these objects, so you only see their silhouettes or very vague elements of their form. Fill these parts with just the basic colour of the background.



## PHOTO-REALISTIC FANTASY

Study a lot of reference photos of environments or animals. These photos help you to paint more realistically, because you see how the light and shadows behave.



## KEY TECHNIQUES

### 01

Make sure you understand the environment your creature lives in. In this case, the deep jungle valleys suggest that this eyeless creature has been sleeping in semi-underground shade and has been disturbed by the humans.

### 02

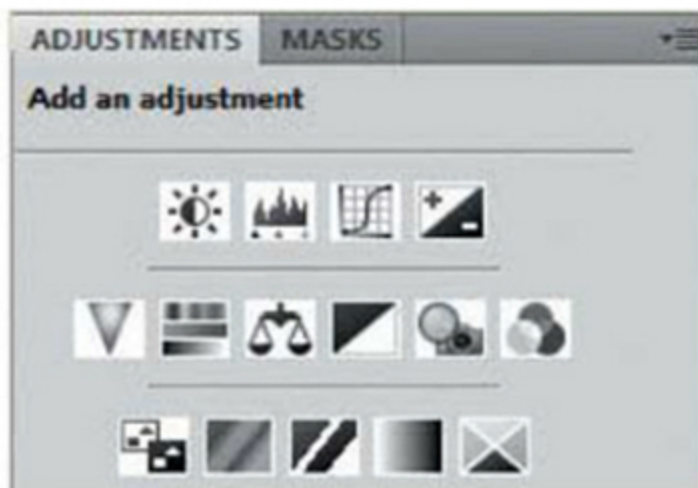
You can think up a weird creature, but there will always be something weirder out there in nature. Look at creatures that behave in the way you want your monster to behave. You can base your ideas on references of a creature of any scale.

### 03

Why has your creature gone into combat against humans? There needs to be a back story that the reader can clearly see. This couple were evidently enjoying some quiet time in the jungle when they awoke this beast.

### 04

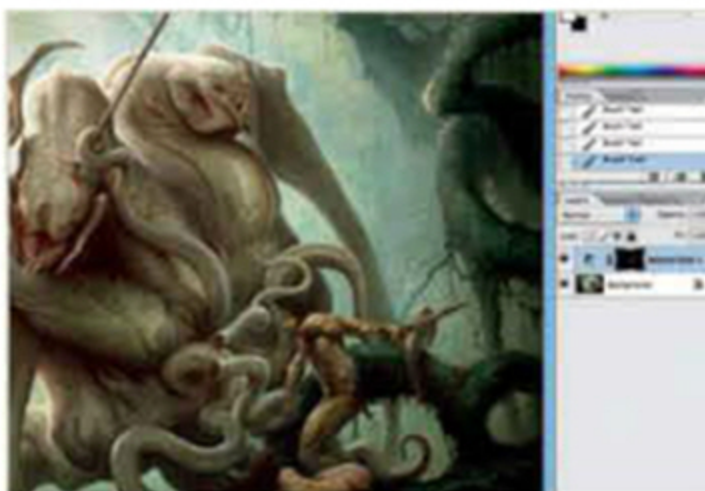
The man was armed with a sword and a spear, which he has thrown at the creature. The spear has injured one of its heads, driving it into a fury of pain, which makes it attack further. Give the viewer a clear piece of storyline to sell the idea.



## 18

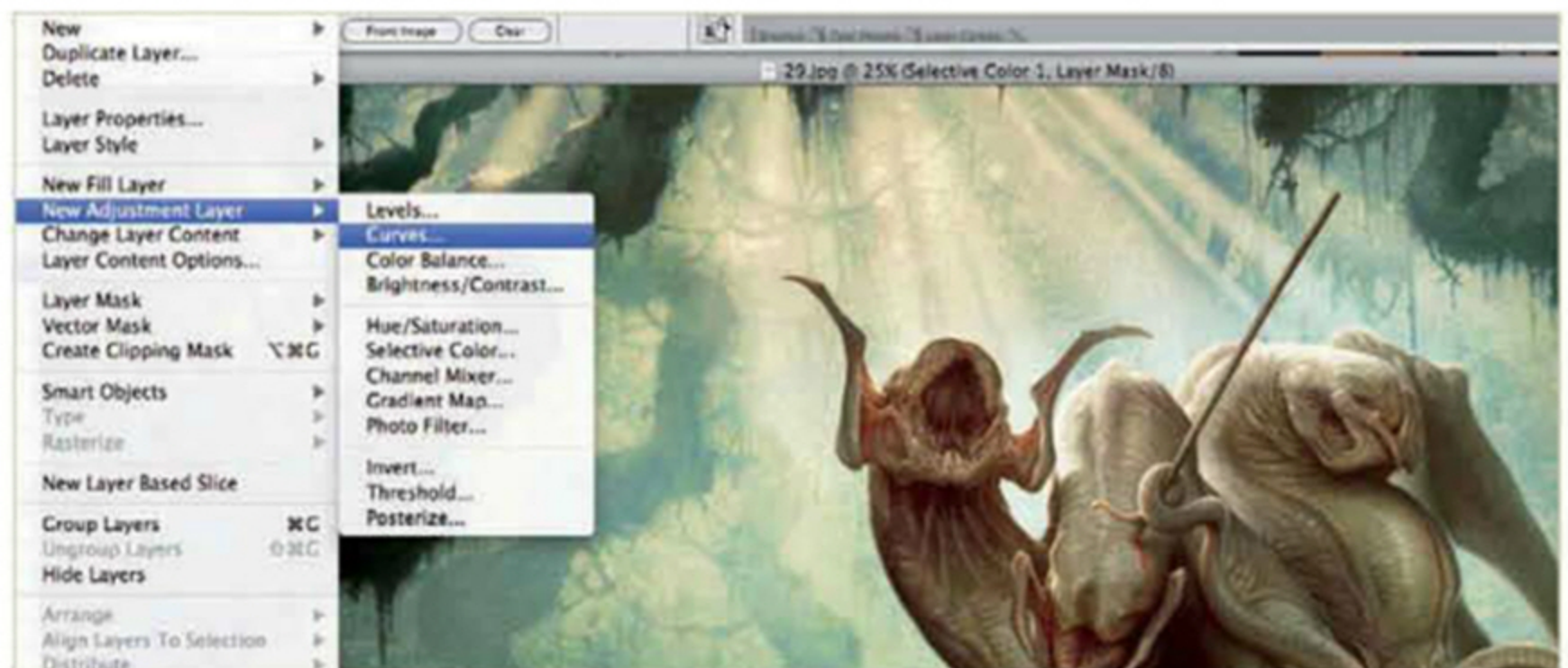
### Correct the colours

The picture is almost finished, but at this stage it often happens that the drawing looks too dark or not punchy enough. These problems are easily fixed with adjustment layers. With the Selective Color adjustment, for example, we can change several colours and with the Channel Mixer we can change the lighting.



**19 Brighten highlights** You can lighten only the highlights or certain colours without changing the rest of the picture. Create a new Selective Color adjustment layer, click the White box on the layer, take the Paint Bucket tool and fill the picture with black. Now take the brush and paint with white on the parts where you want the colour adjustment to show.

**20 Final touches** Balance your colours and contrast using adjustment layers. You can change the contrast with Levels or Curves – experiment with the settings and find out which suit your image best. Remember that you can adjust areas of the painting without tweaking the entire thing using masks.



# Draw and colour line art

**Rob Duenas** guides you through some essential illustration tips

Constance

*Photoshop*



Character design is more than just drawing a random set of details, you have to get their story across visually.

All of the elements should say something about the journey they have taken up until that point and it needs to look cool. When tasked with designing a female knight who rides a trusty horse, the hoisted flag of her standard in hand, you need to think about all the qualities she should represent. Nobility and honour, to name a couple. Also, how different from a warrior or barbarian would she be?

The element of class, like an officer in the army, rather than mercenaries for hire will affect how she looks. And should the design be more realistic or fantasy based? The tendency towards photo-realistic art has dominated Photoshop-based work at the moment and is usually held up as a hallmark of its success. Anything else is either labelled as cartoony or unrealistic. But sometimes breaking away from this hyperrealistic style can lead to more refreshing artwork, and it can be more suitable for particular subjects.

In this tutorial we will focus on specific techniques that won't give you a result like a photo, but something with a touch of real media; something with energy and expression. We will look at how to create linework in Photoshop that looks hand drawn and then how to blend those lines with looser, yet still dynamic, background art. Finally we will look at how these techniques can be used to design a fantasy-based female knight, ready to storm the castle. You decide which parts work best for your art, being as original to your process as you can and allowing the character's story to define her look.

**ROB  
DUENAS**

Artist info



[www.sketchcraft.com](http://www.sketchcraft.com)

I'm a graphic artist at Mad Engine for licensed men's apparel and freelance comic-book covers on weekends. I try to keep my digital work as grounded in traditional methods as I can. Art is an emotion; I prefer attitude to realism.



### WORKING PROGRESS



Step 01, Colour start



Step 05, Armour design



Step 14, Light 'em up



## Chivalric scenes

Combine character design with background art in one fell swoop



**01 Colour start** Make a rough speed painting in colour to start out, as it really helps set the mood before you get too far into the details of a project. Being able to clearly communicate the goals of your image in colour gives you a clear through line.



**02 Volume sketch** Tracing over the basic colour rough, block in the initial construction and costume details. It's important that the figures have volume before you start and that your shapes pop off the page. Try drawing over in silhouettes, blocking in shapes and then turning down the opacity and drawing in the details.

**03 Build the line art** Start the linework, beginning with the elements closest to the viewer. Beginning with her standard, make a basic outline with a hard brush at 6 or 8pt, adding the little details like the war ribbons and chains as you go. These can really help sell the character's story.



**04 Check your work** Drawing line art digitally can mess with your headspace – mostly because of the zoomed-in nature of the process – so it's good to regularly step back and double-check your characters. Don't take too long at this stage, though, as you can waste valuable time staring at your own art when deadlines loom.



**06 Refine the lines** Draw the basic lines with a 6pt hard brush, going back over with a 20pt Oil brush for the outline. You can be loose with the initial lines, as the width of the Oil brush will connect any gaps that are left. Add energy into the lines as you go for dynamic strokes.



**05 Armour design** With the line art for the standard completed, turn your attention to the rest of her armour and its design. For this image, prioritise a fun look over a realistic fantasy style, and work in a few eagle elements to the armour like winged knee pads, wings on her boots and as many talon-like angles as you can fit in.



**07 Final linework and shading** For the final lines, paint in shadows with a hard brush at 50% zoom. This saves a lot of guesswork when it comes to adding hard shadow in colour. Keep the horse lines simple for now, as details like his mane and hoof hair will be painted in colour. Don't forget to Unsharp Mask those lines!

## HORSES FOR COURSES

Knights rode specially bred horses that were capable of dealing with the weight of that plate armour. A knight on a delicate little steed would look like he or she is going to break it! Your knight's horse needs a strong, muscular body and powerful legs and hooves. Warhorses would fight in battle so it needs to look tough, too.



**08 Work up the hues** The background in the distance is taken from the initial colour rough, blending the thumbnail in with the final art. Sometimes you learn as you go, and this technique works surprisingly well to show the distant smoke on the battlefield below.



**09 Use custom brushes** Painting grass can be a little tedious. Try a two-step process, first applying a custom grass brush with a 0 Scatter value and shifting between brush sizes while covering the area. Then blend with a Splatter brush, reapplying the process till you get what you see here. Patience and good taste are key.

**10 Paint the flowers** Paint all of the flowers using Photoshop's standard Watercolor brush, varying the opacity until you get something you are comfortable with. The transparency placed against the splatter grass gives it a really soft, flowery feel.



**11 Thistles and trees** For the thistles, start using the Flat Oil brush, scribbling with basic colour and add a lighter secondary colour on top with the Watercolor brush as before. The trees were made with a custom cloud brush. You can use the Threshold adjustment on a copy of the layer and then use the hard edges as a mask to give it a tree-like silhouette.



## SHINING ARMOUR

When using a style like this, the knight's classic shining armour isn't quite as sparkly as it would be in a realistic painting. Take some inspiration from comics and cartoons and use strong highlights and bounce light to give it some polish instead.



**12 Shade, shade, shade** Take a break from the background and start shading the knight and horse. Go as dark as possible for the time of day so that when you add lights and highlights they really pop. Also, paint some of the horse's mane with the Watercolor brush, going over the lines and adding little strands with the Flat Oil brush.



**13 Texturise** For the horse's spots you can use scans of real watercolours, placing them into Photoshop on an Overlay layer. Use photographs of metal for the textures and set these to Soft Light, erasing out the parts you don't like. You can re-create a nice cloth texture using rice paper, scanned in and set to Linear Burn at 40-70% Opacity.



**14 Light 'em up** And now the fun begins. This is the most natural part of the process, going over and adding all the highlights, hair details and strokes you can to really build up the detail. The end goal is to marry your characters with the background while still allowing them to pop.



**15 The final touches** Wrapping it up, sketch the castle in with a basic hard brush, keeping its simplicity in contrast to the line art. Draw in coloured strokes with a Conté brush and create some lighting effects with a black airbrush set to Linear or Color Dodge. Finally, add a tiny lens flare using the filter to make it look professional.

## DYNAMIC COMPOSITION

Whenever you start laying out a landscape, try to remember the phrase 'bounded sky.' It's a term that refers to shooting at a low angle, making the horizon seem much bigger than it really is. Tilting your perspective or curving it like a racetrack can add motion and energy.

## GOOD HAIR DAY

Painting hair from a line-art base can create a really nice result. Start with the basic volumetric rendering underneath and then, with a softer, painterly brush, add those loose strands manually. You want to break up the hard edges of the contour lines but keep the silhouette.

## ON THE SUBJECT OF TREES

There are many ways to paint trees, and none of the good ones involve a tree brush or a tree stamp. Study real paintings and you will see you can achieve many brush-like effects with gestures alone. Go with the feeling of a tree rather than a perfect clone of one.

## REAL TIME VS DIGITAL TIME

Yes it takes longer to draw line art digitally than traditionally, however, since you get a clean inked version when you are done, it's more like drawing and then inking a piece in terms of the time taken.

**Style School**  
Art genres in a nutshell

## Knightly images

### Explore classic pieces that depict knights

Whenever digital artists search for inspiration or new techniques, they tend to gravitate towards the newest and hottest thing. Sometimes, however, it's not the newest thing that will help you the most in your artwork and it pays to look back.

Sharing work online is great and is where most digital artists go for their inspiration, but don't forget to use art books and look even further back to classical paintings for references too. That way you might find an approach to composition, colour or style that you wouldn't have thought of before, in a piece that has truly stood the test of time.



Name: Antonio de Pereda  
Title: The Knight's Dream  
Year: 1655  
Location: Royal Academy of Fine Arts, San Fernando  
Image: [tinyurl.com/fa-pereda](http://tinyurl.com/fa-pereda)

● You will immediately notice the attention to detail in this piece, not just in the rendering but in the knight's story. What's closest to him is what means the most; money, guns and entertainment. On the far right are flowers. Perhaps in the pursuit of life, he lost his soul? The devil's in the details.



Name: Moritz von Schwind  
Title: Der Ritt Kunos von Falkenstein  
Year: c1850  
Location: Museum of Fine Arts, Leipzig  
Image: [tinyurl.com/fa-schwind](http://tinyurl.com/fa-schwind)

● The knight seems to be playing the front man of a larger operation, using the symbols of his nobility to loot the rich. What's great here is how the artist plays with the emblem of knighthood. If you had never seen or heard of a knight before, then the story would change radically.



Name: Edmund Leighton  
Title: Call to Arms  
Year: 1888  
Location: Private collection  
Image: [tinyurl.com/fa-leighton](http://tinyurl.com/fa-leighton)

● There are many ways to dissect the story here, but what is perhaps most interesting is how the knights are used in contrast with the focal character, how they change the mood of the happy ceremony in one fell swoop. Never forget that with knights always comes war.



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# Paint a fantasy landscape

**Titus Lunter** shows how to create a scene on an epic scale with a sense of eerie grandeur

Crystal Rise

*Photoshop*



A fantasy landscape should feel grand and epic. Every image is different and is constructed differently, but there are a few things that always stay the same. Scale, atmosphere and colour treatment are the most important ones to think about on a technical level and these can be worked on in any order depending on your own taste. The other important element is story, but let's start with scale.

Creating a grand scene depends almost entirely on scale and scale needs elements to create comparisons, so paint things viewers will recognise like people or birds. The

smaller you make them, the bigger the scale of the scene, but remember that the detail increases as well. Working with texture brushes with high noise or scatter values is a nice way of putting this in quickly. Experiment in greyscale and then think about atmosphere. Atmosphere works very well with scale – in fact, they're very much linked to each other! Sometimes scale and detail just aren't enough to make the scene work, and this is where atmosphere kicks in. Try blending colours and pushing certain features into the background. For big landscapes, the closer an element is



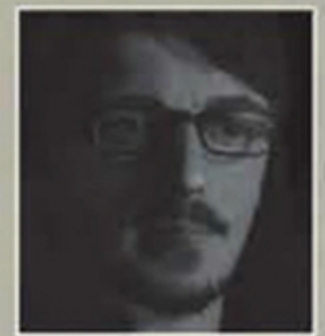
to the horizon, the more desaturated it is and the less contrast it will have. Remember, to achieve convincing depth, place dark elements at the front, light at the back.

The fantasy touch can be created by adding objects like glowing crystals, wisps of energy, fantasy architecture or a combination of all of these, and it's this magical touch that will make up the story. You want to leave people wondering what's happening and have them imagine their own narrative in the scene. A good landscape painting always leaves room for a good story.



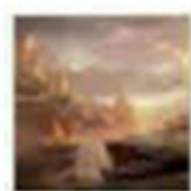
## TITUS LUNTER

Artist info



[www.u2644.com](http://www.u2644.com)

I'm a professional freelance concept artist for the games industry. I paint and learn with the philosophy that every artwork is a struggle and should teach you something new. For me it's not only about creating epic pictures but about struggling and improving.



# Create the scene

Develop a landscape from sketch to final image

- 01 Sketch values** To start your image, create a quick black-and-white sketch. Keep it very loose as you might want to change things around later. Just go for the basic outline of the land and lighting to give you a rough idea of the values.

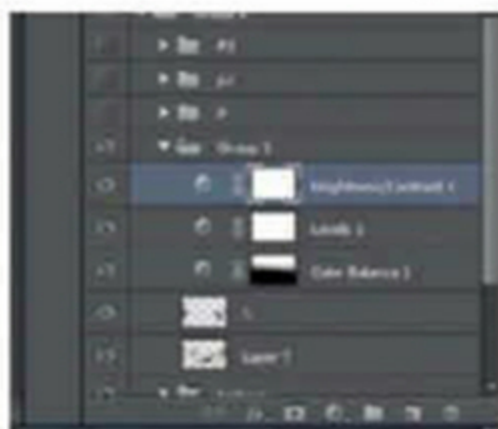


- 03 Try out colours** A big part of the story and mood of the painting comes from the colour, so rough that in on a new layer to get a feel for the atmosphere. Play with the Hue/Saturation adjustment to get the feel of different colours. Dreamy scenes often have orange and pink tones. Using complementary colours is good for shadow tones because it makes lights and darks stand out.



- 05 The push** Try putting some clouds into the sky and push the foreground tones. Maybe it needs to be darker or could use some more texture? Be critical of your work. At this stage you're looking for the feel of the scene to be right.

- 06 Dreamy warmth** Make the scene more dreamlike by adding some red into the mix. Experiment with the Color Balance adjustment and try different things. Be bold and use masks to highlight certain areas only so that you can adjust selectively – mask out the main crystals, for example, to work just on the land, sea and sky.



- 02 The mystery** This painting will have a mysterious city in the background. They can be tricky to paint so take your time to work this up to a decent standard. Look at references of cities in the distance and observe how they become a mass of solid shapes.



- 04 Photos and texture** Blocking in materials by using some photographs helps with setting up the scene and developing perspective and scale as well as base texture. Always use your own, a purchased or free-to-use stock image, or ask permission of the photographer before going ahead!



- 07 The moons** Nothing sells fantasy better than a few moons. Maybe one of them has been damaged in an attack. This can help with the story – perhaps this is where the crystals have come from?

## REAL-WORLD REFERENCES

Everything you paint has to reference the real world in some way, even if it's alien. This makes sure people can recognise what you are painting. Using real-world textures is a solid base for this – if you understand something you know when you can deviate from it.

**08 Contrast** The image is looking a bit too flat, so at this stage you can try bumping the contrast to emphasise that epic depth. Remember, though, never to use full black for your shading. More accurate deep-shadow tones are purples, greens and browns.



## FLEXIBILITY

As an artist you have to be flexible, not only as a person but in your paintings as well. Taking critiques can be difficult but it will help you in the end. Approach your painting in the same way; don't be afraid to change it up and make it better.

**09 Push the scale** The scene didn't feel epic enough once values and colour were in so let's make it bigger! Never be afraid to change things around and improve your image – in this case, the grandiose scale was boosted to reinforce the size of this place to the viewer.



**10 Compositional checks** Always check your composition throughout the painting process. Make sure you have a nice divide and force the viewer to look where you want them to by using points and counterpoints. Here the city and main crystal perform that job.

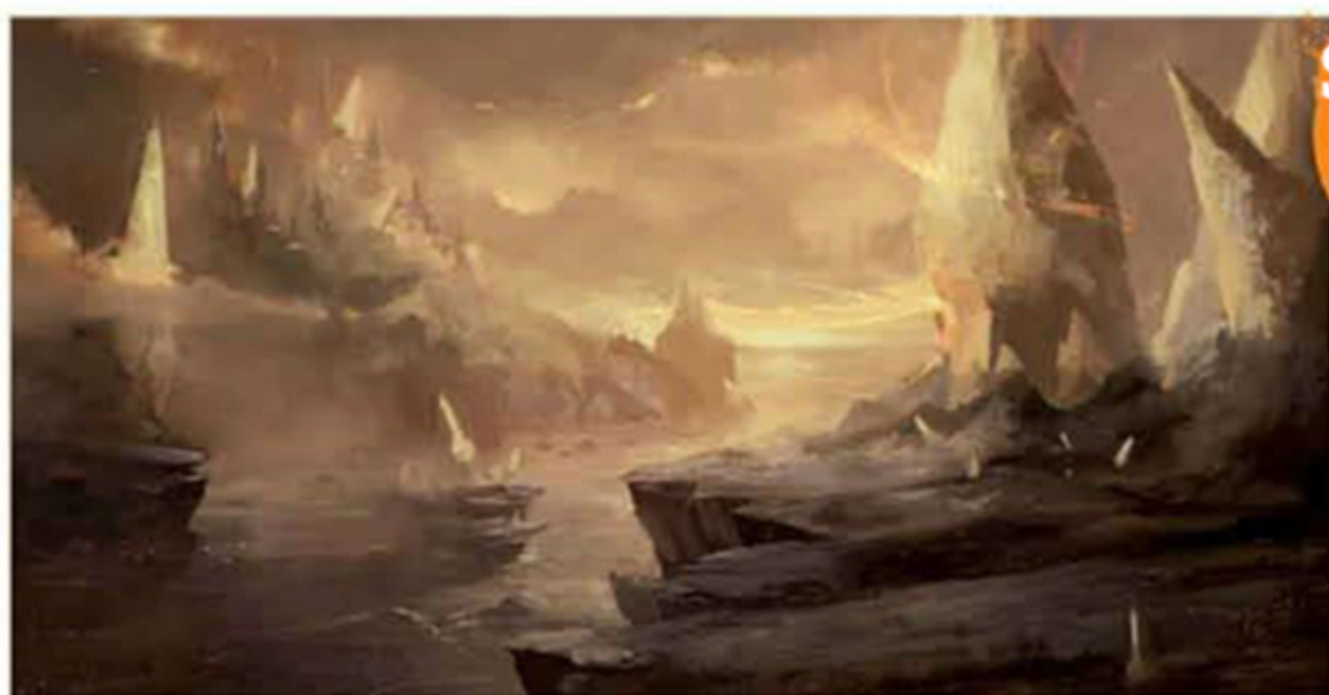


**11 The close-up** Compositions need to work on every level so zoom in and check if it still works within the main focal area. Think about where you want the viewer to look and how they get there. Here the point of the crystal and the shape of the inlet channel draw the eye up to the city.



## 12 Develop the rendering

When the composition works, just start working on the image. Start rendering and enjoy a casual part of the painting process. Move around rather than focusing on one part, otherwise you'll unbalance the image before you've finished.



**13 Corrections** After you've worked up the major parts, give some love to the areas which you haven't worked on a lot and start putting in a few more colour corrections. All the new additions might have changed the colours quite a bit.

### PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

It's very important to set your expectations based on your personal skills. Painting is hard work and takes years to master so don't get discouraged if it isn't perfect! Keep practising, ask for input from others and listen to what people have to say.



**14 Flip and check** Keeping a fresh perspective is very important, so this is something you should be doing throughout the entire painting process. Flip your image back and forth to spot those odd compositional mistakes that can creep in. Mistakes show up clearly when flipped.



**15 Finishing touches** Work in the final flourishes – a shadow here, a highlight there – making sure the texture and brushwork is consistent. Finally, place a few adjustment layers to fine-tune the saturation and contrast.

**Style School**  
Art genres in a nutshell

## The drama of a landscape

### How artists approached the contrast between civilisation and wilderness

The dichotomy between the raw wildness of nature – as evinced by mountains, oceans, rock formations and so on – and the ordered and safe fields, roads and cities of the settled landscape is one that artists have explored throughout history. Contrasting large natural formations with small people and their structures can express the power of nature over us, or conversely express our power over the natural world. Take a look at how these artists managed both of these concepts and decide how you'll use their tricks to make your fantasy landscape a place of fear, discovery or safety.

**Name:** Caspar David Friedrich  
**Title:** Mountain Peak with Drifting Clouds  
**Year:** c1835  
**Location:** Kimbell Art Museum  
**Image:** [tinyurl.com/FA-Friedrich](http://tinyurl.com/FA-Friedrich)

● As a Romantic painter, Caspar David Friedrich was interested in making the landscape feel epic and dramatic. Here a vertiginous mountain is contrasted against the tree (itself much larger than a person) in the extreme foreground, providing a comparison of scale that makes the scene immersive and at the same time strangely unsettling. Even without a human figure to give us a reference point, we know that everything in this little painting is much bigger than us.



**Name:** Frederic Edwin Church  
**Title:** Cotopaxi  
**Year:** 1855  
**Location:** Museum of Fine Arts, Houston  
**Image:** [tinyurl.com/FA-Church](http://tinyurl.com/FA-Church)

● A member of the Hudson River School (19th Century painters of American frontier landscapes), Church was concerned with documenting the unspoiled New World and with ideas around the way that humans colonise landscape: discovery, exploration and settlement. This scene – a volcano in Ecuador – uses the scale of the landscape in comparison to the tiny figures to create a sense of discovery and wonder.



**Name:** Albert Bierstadt  
**Title:** Storm in the Mountains  
**Year:** 1870  
**Location:** Museum of Fine Arts, Houston  
**Image:** [tinyurl.com/FA-Bierstadt](http://tinyurl.com/FA-Bierstadt)

● A German-American artist painting scenes of the American West, Bierstadt is a halfway point between the sturm-und-drang German Romanticism of Friedrich and the wide-eyed fascination of the Hudson River School artists. This terrifyingly huge mountain storm is truly awe-inspiring, but the tiny settlements on the plain below are snug and secure in their neat field-boundaries; man has tamed the power of this landscape.

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# How to paint a necromancer

**Suzanne Helmigh** guides you through the skills and techniques you need to bring the dead back to life in your art

←—————  
Caller of the Fallen

—————→  
*Photoshop*





## SUZANNE HELMIGH

Artist info



[www.helmighs.com](http://www.helmighs.com)

Fantasy worlds and their inhabitants are my favourite subjects to paint, sometimes as concept art for games, other times as illustrations for card games or books. Whenever I get some free time I meet up with other artists and do some life drawing.

Necromancy is a form of black magic where there is communication with a spirit or a complete resurrection of a dead body. The Greeks were the first to put a name to this dark concept and it pops up in Homer's *The Odyssey*. A sorcerer who practises this kind of magic is called a necromancer; a compound word comprised of the old Greek for 'dead body' and 'divination'. A necromancer can summon up the dead and is able to control his undead subjects as if they are his puppets.

To draw a successful necromancer, learning about the concept's myths and iconography will really help you to get across to the viewer who this character is and what they're doing. Necromancers can be found in a lot of novels and games nowadays – they are a common class in fantasy MMORPGs, for example. In terms of appearance, necromancers can vary between voodoo, tribal-looking beings to

something more akin to wizards and zombies. The recurring factor in their look is the sense of decay or being drained of energy. It's a common idea that necromancers give a bit of their own life energy to resurrect or animate a dead body.

Suitable settings for them would be graveyards, old battlefields or the underworld itself. As characters, necromancers often have ambitions to build up an undead army or, more romantically, to bring a loved one back to life. However, the dead cannot return as they were, but as something slightly more twisted. The corpses that the necromancer practises his art on don't have to be human; they can be animals or even mythical creatures. Once a necromancer has used a lot of his own life energy to awaken the dead, he can use a reverse method on the living, sucking their life energy to take it back into his own heart.

### Raise your own necromancer

Create an engaging character and an eerie scene



#### 01 Composition

Start by creating your basic composition. This is a very loose phase where you don't need to worry about anatomical detail, just the positioning of your characters, their pose and the atmosphere of their environment.



#### 02 Focal point

Think about your focus. In this case it's the character, especially his face. Make sure that the other things in the image lead you towards this.



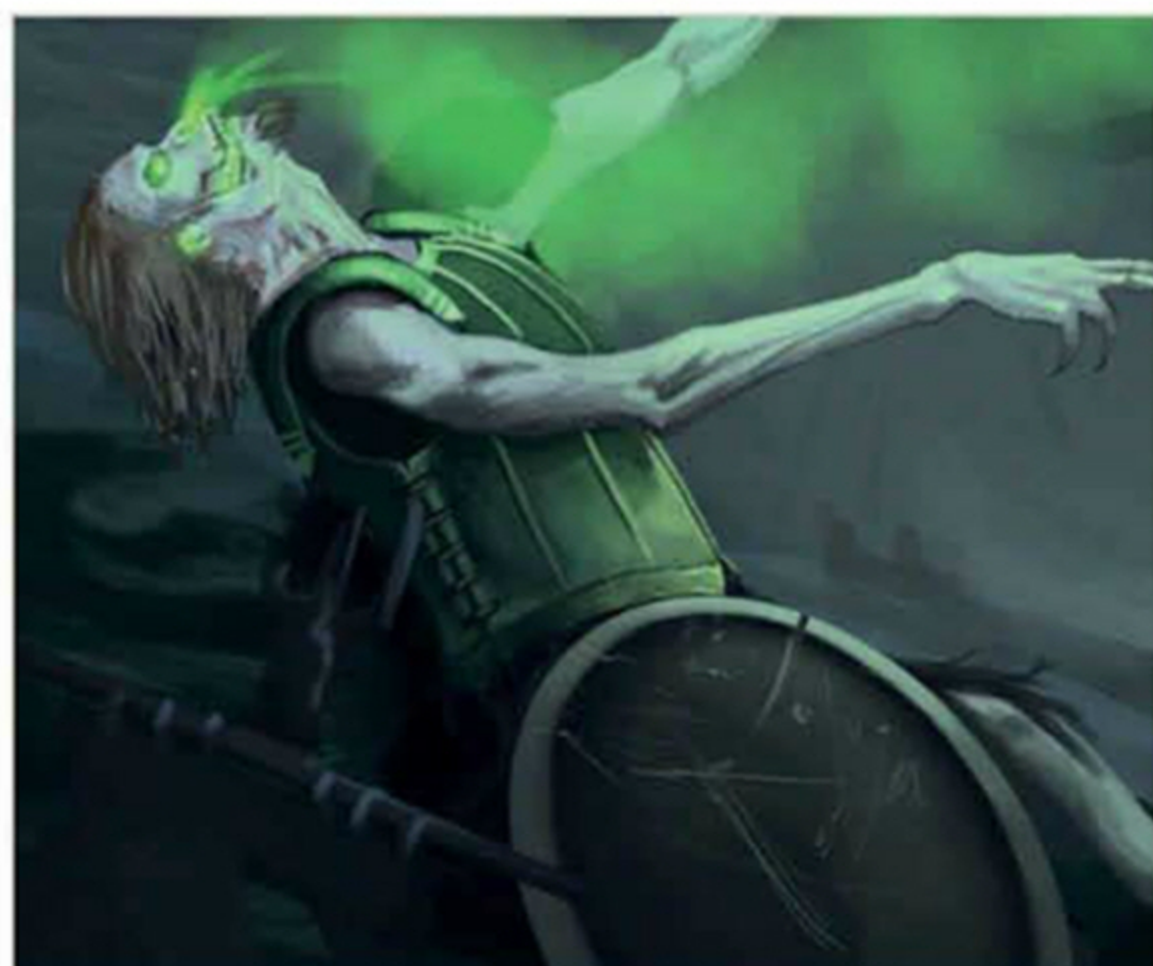
**03 Necromancer's anatomy** Start working on the anatomy of the characters. This can be from your imagination or using a reference. It can be very useful to take your own reference photos and doing a lot of life drawing will help improve your skills. Remember not to simply trace the photo but rather keep it as an example.



**04 Zombie anatomy** Now take a look at your anatomy book or online references. A half or fully decayed body shows more muscles and bones, and these need to be right. There are different muscles that stand out depending on what pose you are holding, so don't just learn about how the muscles look, learn about how they work too.



**05 Environment** To balance out the characters, start working on the environment they're in. Keep in mind that the further away things are the less sharp and colourful they look.



#### 06 Battlefield

Set the scene by painting things that you would find on a battlefield on and around the awoken dead. This will give the sense that there is more than just him in this environment. Think of banners, flags, shields, spears, swords and some other dead bodies.



### ANATOMY

When you work on characters, make sure you learn a lot about anatomy. Take life-drawing classes, read about how the body works and practise foreshortening. Repeating this will greatly improve your anatomical skills and you will need less and less references to get things right.

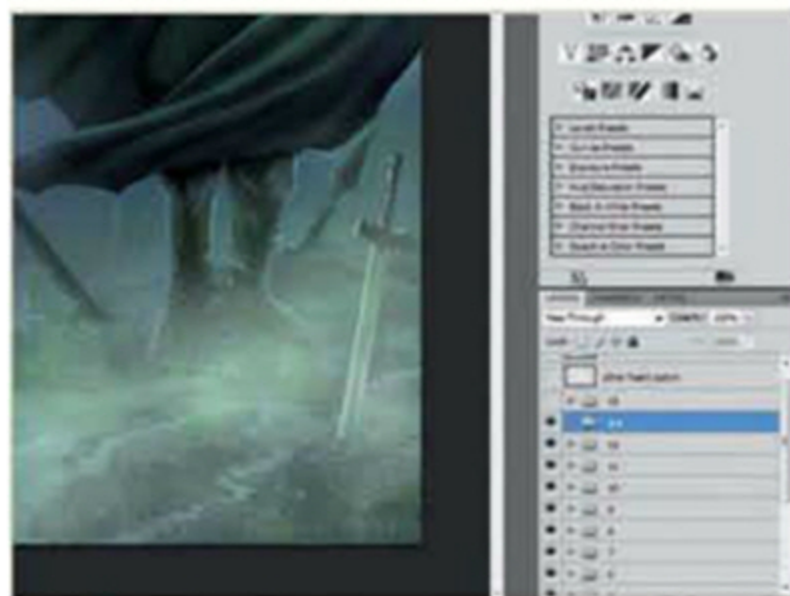
**07 Hands** Make them bony and magical. Have a look at your own hands and put them close to a light source to see how the shading works. For the magic effect, put your brush settings on Color Dodge. This will make your strokes look like they're glowing.



**08 Clothes** Work out the details on the clothing. You can still switch designs if you like, it's never too late to throw things around. If you are happy with what you have, simply give it that extra bit of detail.



**13 Clouds** Define the clouds in the background with a gradient. This means that the clouds near the moon have more detail and brightness than the clouds towards the left where they will catch less light. Keep in mind that you should stick to the directional lines you started with, as breaking this flow will break the composition.



**14 Complementary textures** Go all out with some crazy brushes on a new layer. Since the strongest colours in this piece are green and blue, adding some purple into the mix will complement the green. Once you've made a wonderful messy artwork, put that layer on Overlay or Color Dodge at a very low opacity for a grungy touch.

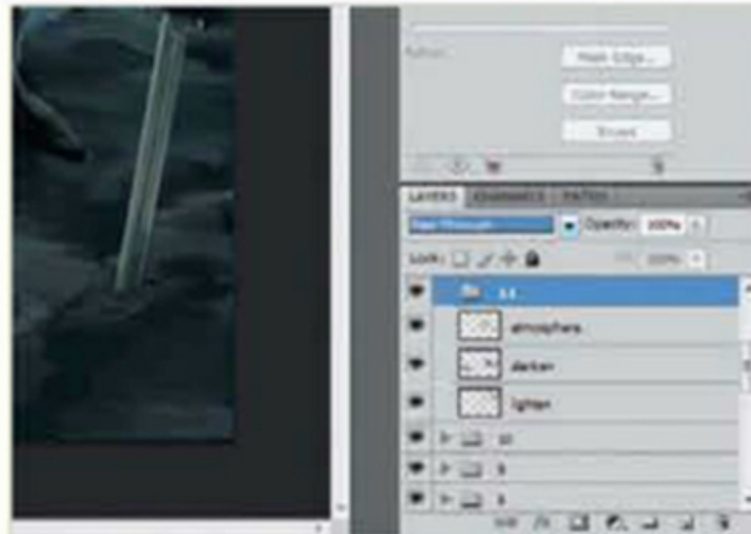
**09 Give life** This is where the magic happens. It is vital to create a focal line towards the necromancer, so experiment with the display of magic. In this case a tentacle-like swirl looks very creepy. Sparkles would look too friendly, but an electric spark or smoke will do the trick too. Make sure you keep it original.



## GRADIENTS

Colour gradients add so much when it comes to lighting and depth, and are crucial to getting a realistic look. To make it work, use the selection tools or masks to keep between the preferred borders – you don't want to lose your sharp edges.

**10 Veins** Render the veins coming from the heart towards the necromancer's hand, where he releases the life source towards the dead. This will emphasise the gory process and show what his body goes through to perform his magic.



**11 Gradients equal depth** Make the characters three-dimensional by applying tonal gradients where needed. Merge them onto a single layer and select it, and then press Cmd/Ctrl+H to hide this selection. Now you can work on layers set to Darken and Lighten to create these gradients just using a soft brush. Adjust the opacity to create the right effect for your piece.



**12 Mystery mists** Create some fog with a custom-made soft brush and a sparkle brush. With these you can push things backwards and forwards to your liking. The mist can also cover up shapes that stand out too much and end up looking distracting. This will also add to the horror feel.



**15 Meticulous finish** Copy and merge all the layers in your document. Duplicate the resulting layer and zoom in on the areas that you feel could still use some work. This can usually take up to 60 per cent of the time spent on the entire image. It's only finished when you're happy!

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# Fantasy Art Skills

Welcome to the Art Skills section where you'll learn quick ways to source, sketch and compose key fantasy elements

Let our experts help you with your creative queries

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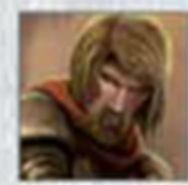
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Discover how to design, draw and paint armour for fantasy battle scenes



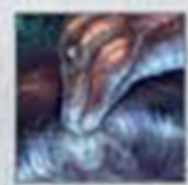
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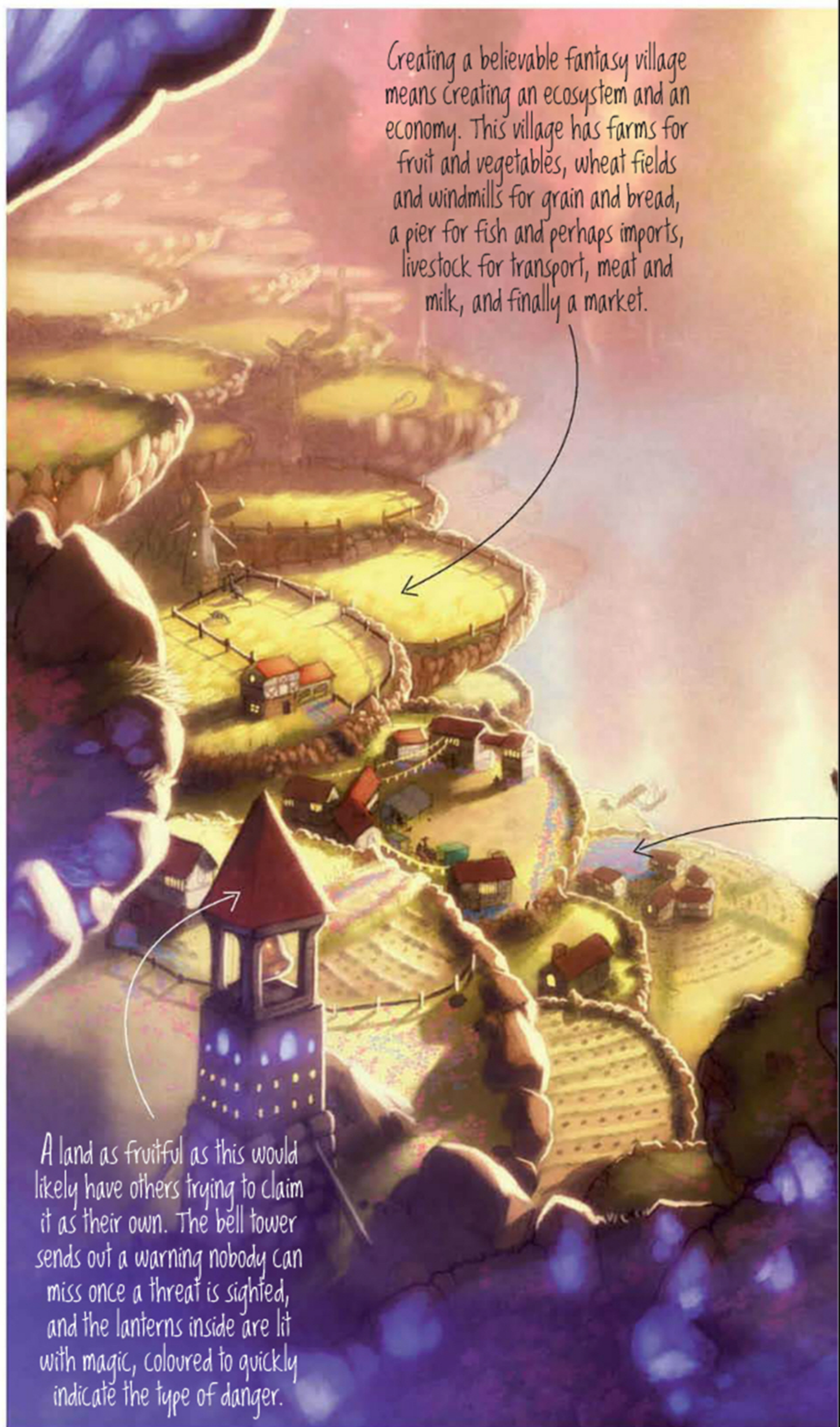
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Find out how Rodrigo Ramos created this image



Creating a believable fantasy village means creating an ecosystem and an economy. This village has farms for fruit and vegetables, wheat fields and windmills for grain and bread, a pier for fish and perhaps imports, livestock for transport, meat and milk, and finally a market.

A land as fruitful as this would likely have others trying to claim it as their own. The bell tower sends out a warning nobody can miss once a threat is sighted, and the lanterns inside are lit with magic, coloured to quickly indicate the type of danger.



EN  
GINGERBOOM

Artist info



[www.nattherat.co.uk](http://www.nattherat.co.uk)

I make philosophical, introspective and sometimes speculative comics. They are almost always science fiction and my favourite part of the process tends to be designing the creatures and cultures of other planets.

# Illustrate a fantasy village

Learn how you can mix high fantasy with the believable to create an environment illustration that is both plausible and immersive

**The tranquil village home to a would-be hero is a frequent and successful trope in the fantasy genre, and the destruction of such a village often serves as motivation for the hero to go on their quest.** To make this believable and even emotional, however, the village itself needs to become a character.

A good way to start is to think of the resources available to the people in your settlement. What they have available will affect how they eat, how they build, how they live and their culture; perhaps they need farms, mills, mines or trading posts. By thinking of the industrial buildings they would need, you will begin to have a rounded settlement capable of housing your cast of characters.

To believe the hero would have the motivation to avenge or rebuild their home, it must begin with this plausibility. Colour will also play an important role, as the location needs to be appealing and desirable, somewhere that will make your audience wish they could go. Keep the palette warm and inviting, only dropping to cold when disaster strikes – you want to get your audience to feel the loss of this place too. Composition will help a great deal in controlling the emotion your artwork projects. An open space will be particularly inviting, as well as safe and comfortable. However, when things take a turn for the worse, use the landscape to evoke emotion – sharp lines and closed-in spaces along with a more extreme perspective will suggest danger and peril.

For a sense of realism and of purpose, the villagers gathering together shows the village as a close and peaceful community, unaware of impending disaster. Nearby, lanterns from a celebration have been left up around the market, and the stalls pack up for the night.

**03 Impending disaster** To lead this village to certain doom, I needed a fitting frame for the action. I closed the rock formations in on all sides, creating a claustrophobic effect that contrasted with the open fields. Then, a glow from the blue flame of an unknown assailant lights up the foreground and approaches the village, blocking any escape the people might have.



**01 World building** I began with the landscape, coming up with an idea that this planet houses huge rock formations that act like strawberry plant pots. Fertile fields fill each basin, and the rocks form spires jutting out of the ocean.



**02 Town planning** I worked with the staple of many fantasy villages; quaint Tudor houses and farmland. In an environment as alien and unusual as this one, the architecture serves as a reminder that this is not a hostile or unfamiliar place. Without this cue, the scene would have taken on a decidedly more sinister tone.



# Essential sword-fighting poses

Five basic action poses that will help any artist illustrate swordplay in their fantasy work

Sword fighting is exciting to watch, whether it's the Olympic fencing or a dynamic battle sequence in an action film. I've heard a rumour that fencing is the second fastest sport in the Olympics, and it's definitely true that movements in sword fighting are so exciting because they happen at lightning speed.

Body gesture and weight distribution play a big part in showing the movement and speed of the swordsman. There are a number of ways to do this depending on what style you are working in. Here we will be watching the young prince show us some of the key attack moves that he has been learning from his court's master swordsman as he vanquishes the evil Knight Stuffkins Most Foul. At first he seems almost shy of this little demonstration. However, as

the demonstration continues he loosens up and becomes much more enthusiastic.

What I have learned from research and my own experience in martial-arts training is that a solid relationship with the ground is paramount. Keeping the legs wide with knees bent and the feet at right angles is the best way to keep your opponent from gaining control. In practice this is hard to maintain and fast movements, stepping and jumping can soon make even the most disciplined of fighters turn into a ball of flailing appendages. It is this latter state that is much more interesting to illustrate. Elements around the action can play into the excitement as well. As an illustrator it is your job to cast the players and set up the props; research makes this possible.

“Gesture and weight distribution play a big part in showing movement and speed”

EDWARD  
“JOEL”  
WITTLIF

Artist info



[paperbag-ninja.  
deviantart.com](http://paperbag-ninja.deviantart.com)

I am a self-taught digital artist living in Colorado. With a background and formal training in traditional art, my interests vary from impressionistic plein air painting and comic art to speed painting.



## Salute

The salute is a formal promise to abide by the rules and to fight honourably. That being said, a chaotic character would not be portrayed saluting their opponent but an evil character might be (to give a false sense of security). The formality is portrayed in the stance with straight legs and the feet at right angles. Standing with his back straight, his weight is evenly distributed and his legs are close together.

# Fantasy Art Skills

This relaxed posture, firmly rooted on the ground, reveals that the movement is slow and controlled. His facial expression is also calm. Our young swordsman is still keeping it formal at this point and practising one of the stock moves his master has taught him.



## Diagonal cut

His stance is wide and his feet are perpendicular to each other, giving a strong foundation. Staying formal, his sword arm is held loose like a spring. His sword hand is turned palm up so that his knuckles are facing the direction of the diagonal cut. His weight is still square over his feet and he has not over-extended himself.

Everything about this moment suggests energy and a lack of formality. His shoe is flying off, his hair is blown off of his face and parts of the knight's stuffing are thrown up into the air. The second before impact is often the most visually interesting.



## Thrust

Now we are getting into some action. Stepping back with his left foot, our young prince has thrust the tip of his sword into Knight Stuffkins's heart. Notice how the weight is carried on the forward foot and force is shown to push up through the sword arm. The viewer sees from the shadows that elements in the drawing are not anchored to the ground. The mind automatically makes a connection between this and movement.

## Killingstrike

So much for the salute. It would have been easy to draw this with the prince already on top of the evil knight, thrashing away at what was left of his opponent. However, the anticipation of him in midair adds to the tension. Adding details like his shoe coming off and his tunic becoming unbuttoned helps energise the character. While drawing static figures in an unmoving environment is unavoidable, try adding as much movement as possible, where possible.



## Double

Having kept his weight balanced, he is able to quickly bring up his left foot and cross the evil knight's chest with the tip of his sword. Notice how his weight is kept squared over a wide stance. Keeping the hips parallel with the shoulders shows the solid pose with his knees bent. These swipes are quick jabs and not full-on.



## Render realistic textures

Maximise lighting potential and keep it detailed



**01 Begin the painting** To start off painting your fantasy armour, you should block in your colour values. While there are many approaches that you can take to begin a piece, getting some rough colours down within your shape is a great way to help cement the concept in your mind. It also helps to set the composition.



**02 Points of interest** Here I start to think about the areas where I want to showcase the armour. Some lighter brushstrokes have been added to bring certain forms out while pushing others back. We can see this happening as I enhance the knight and ranger on the right while playing down the knight carrying the shield on the left.

# Paint fantasy armour

Discover how to paint and apply brushwork to metallic elements using Photoshop

**ABE  
TARAKY**

Artist info



[abetaraky.blogspot.ca](http://abetaraky.blogspot.ca)

I work as a visual development and concept artist. My training in both traditional and digital mediums allows me to approach ideas through a broad range of techniques. Along with painting, I enjoy 3D modelling, rigging, animating and sketching.

Any form of clothing, armour or day-to-day wear can help describe the nature and history of a character. As a result, being aware of and incorporating clothing types and sub-textual details can give an artist that much-needed control over the message that they are communicating.

Just as there are a variety of character archetypes, there is also a wide range of armour archetypes. For instance, a lone ranger would not be dressed in a full suit of shining armour; instead, she or he may wear clothing made mostly of cloth and leather with minor armour plating to reflect their status.

When designing an archetype it is best to first gather as many references as possible. Using references helps create believability and ensures that we, as designers, are not reinventing every element of the work.



**03 Light sources** I add in some brighter reds to the cape to give a sense of superiority to the central knight. Also, some hits from the primary light source are added to the figures. At this point I decide to add a secondary light source, located behind the characters. The main goal of this is to give the forms a convincing rim light.



**04 Character elements** I have added numerous elements of interest to clarify the character types as well as the materials used for their armour. I primarily use a standard layer for the face and cloth detail while incorporating two metallic textures to both sets of horse armour. This further demonstrates that it is made of metal.



**05 Detail and focus** Finally, the armour gets reworked with some caricatured realism as well as some finer details. For these elements I rely on a detail brush with little to no opacity. During this stage it is important to put all of your efforts towards emphasising the key features within the painting and directing the viewer.

# Design a giant

Learn how you can design and paint a believable giant character within a scene

Giants can have many shapes and looks in fantasy artwork – they can look similar to humans or other animals. They can consist of different materials like stone, wood or even water and fire. But there is one thing they all have in common – they are giant! And our character in this tutorial is no exception.

In this case the giant is a mammal-like creature; he has skin like a human but it's a different colour and much thicker. The habitat of this giant is the mountains, and it is very important to think about where your creature lives before you begin to design him. Because this giant needs to walk across canyons as well as climb mountains, it was important for me to design him with a wiry body. He is constantly moving around and climbing mountains so he can't have too much body fat. I designed his feet to be similar to hands, they even have a thumb of sorts almost like an ape's. This would help him to climb and travel through the difficult terrain of his home environment. Because the giant has a huge torso, long limbs and large hands and feet, he needs pretty well-trained muscles to move his body in an effective way.

To show the size of the giant it's necessary to place some comparisons for scale. In this case I placed some humans in the scene. The different size of the giant and the humans shows not only how big the giant is but also the scale of the rocks and the environment to make it even more impressive.

“To show the size... place some comparisons for scale”

## How to paint a giant



### Rough concepts

The first part of the process was the concept art, and I began with roughing out his head and face. I was pretty sure that I wanted to have a giant with a human-like face, but I wasn't so sure about his horns. I drew different horn designs to find out which one fitted best. The next step for me was to design his hands and feet, and the final part of this stage was to find a rough shape for his body.

To make the skin of the giant more interesting, I added some freckles and a reddish tone. I did this by using layer styles. For the freckles I used a Soft Light layer. The Soft Light layer is a pretty useful mode to add textures on a picture. For the reddish tone I used a Color layer and a soft brush.

### MICHAEL LÜCKHOF

Artist info



[www.digitaldab.de](http://www.digitaldab.de)

I'm 34 years old and I am from Germany. I work for a small game-development company. Drawing and painting is still my biggest hobby. Until I was 30 I worked as a social worker, but then I decided to make my hobby into my profession.

To show how big even the hands of the giant are, I draw some humans beside him. This shows that even one of his fingers is bigger than a human. I like the idea that both humans and the giant are very peaceful and curious without fear.

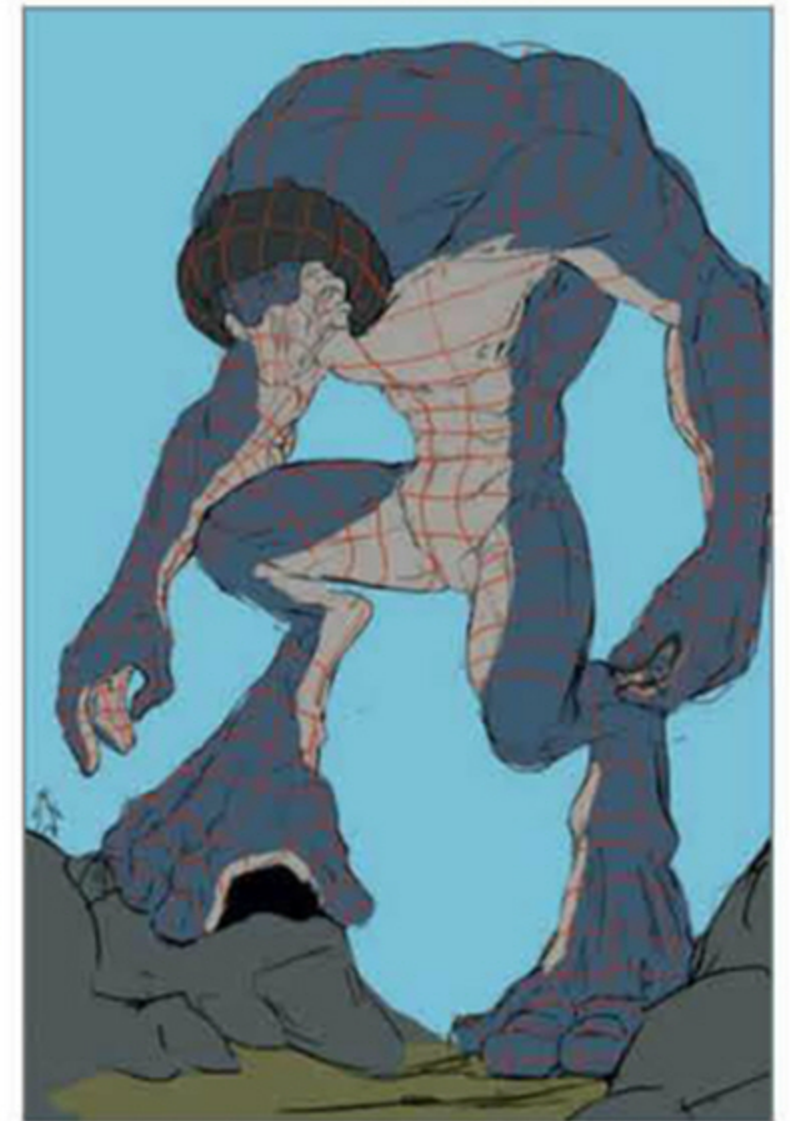
To show the immense weight of the giant you can depict how his foot presses into the ground. To do this I paint ripples on the ground around his foot as if it's mud someone has stepped in.

# Fantasy Art Skills



## Line art

For me, the line art is one of the most important parts in the creation of a picture. I used the concept drawings I made to work the giant up from a rough sketch into a more detailed one. At this stage of the line art I tried to finalise the shape of the giant and how he would stand in the picture. I roughly sketched in some boulders on the ground and a human as a size reference.



## Flat colour blocking

For this step I thought about the colours the giant should have, as well as the colour of the environment, and blocked them in. As a preparation for the shading process, I drew a grid that follows the volume of the giant's body. This makes it easier to understand where the directional light source hits his body (so where to paint highlights) and where it fades out.



## Shading process

I think this is the most complex part in the process as there are many things you have to think about. In this case we have a sunny day in the mountains, which means there is blue ambient light and a white directional light. I used the grid to see where the directional light hits. For the parts where no sunlight hits the surface, I mixed blue into the colours used to bring the ambient light in.



## Detailing

Besides the initial drawing, this is my favourite part. At this stage I define all the small things in the picture like the eyes, the wrinkles in the face, the facial expressions, spots, veins and even dirt under his nails. All the things I thought about while I shaded the rougher parts or while I worked on the line art come out here. At this stage the giant gains a lot of personality.

# Enchanted effects in a forest scene

Discover the elements and techniques you can use to create a painting of a magical forest

A magical forest is one of the most common scenes to appear in fantasy illustrations, where all the magical and mysterious creatures reside. But what are the elements that can instantly differentiate a magical forest from a normal one? These can include self-lit plants and creatures, faeries, old and twisted trees, fireflies and good old toadstools to name a few. You can also use unexpected colours to help you, such as pink leaves and electric-blue flowers. Playing around with scale is another method, for example, you can make a giant mushroom that is bigger than a tree, or maybe a tiny tree trunk with huge leaves.

An easy trick that can help you when designing fantasy plants or animals is to use a sea creature for reference. If you apply some sea-creature elements to your land animals – incorporating their shapes and colours – they will look quite exotic. For example, painting a translucent creature is like painting a jellyfish. You can also look at macro photos for inspiration; they generally have very different shapes and colours to the creatures we see in daily life.

Of course, don't step away too much from the forest itself. If you only use the crazy colours and shapes from the sea, it will most likely just look like you're underwater! You should look at references from a real forest too, and then exaggerate them with the features you have taken from other sources.

## Down to the woods

A structured way of creating a magical forest image



### 01 Block out

Block out the image using linework to begin. This can help you to focus on designing the shape of the tree, which is the main element of this image. Concentrate on the composition without worrying too much about the minor details.



### 02 Render values

Work on how the lighting will appear within the image. It's much easier to draw the tree in black and white first because it's a very complex structure, and working with the colours can easily distract you from working on the volume of the object.

## YANGTIAN LI

Artist info



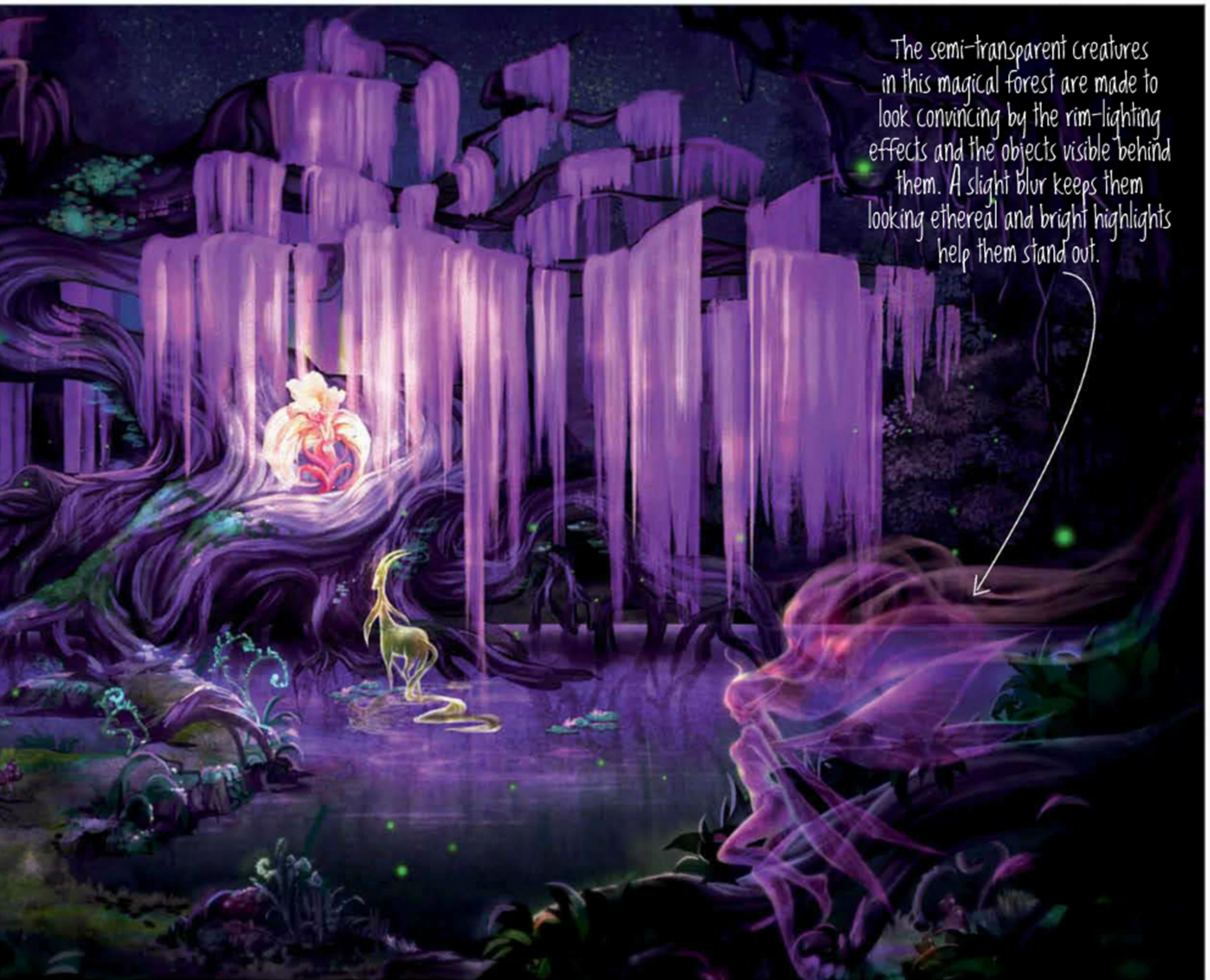
[www.yangtianli.com](http://www.yangtianli.com)

Yangtian Li is a freelancing digital artist and animator, who is currently working on illustrations and game artwork. She celebrates the beauty of colour and story in her work through a hybrid art style between manga and realism.

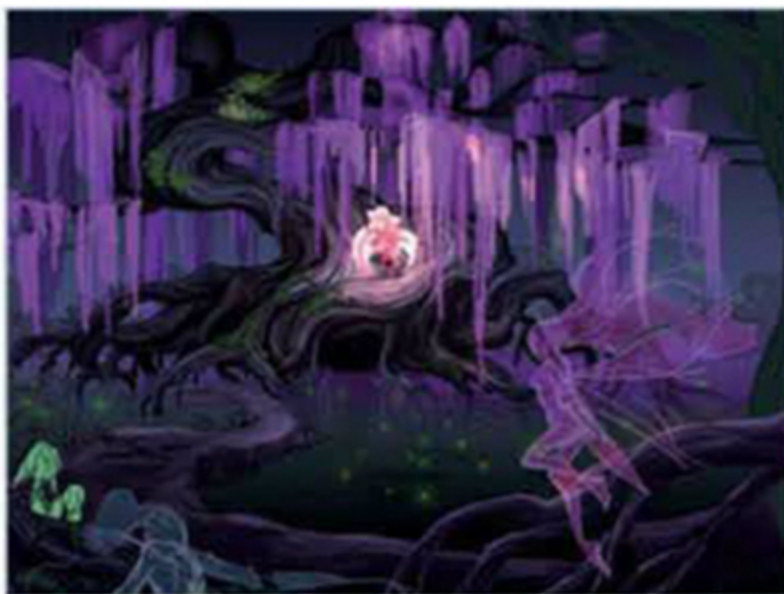
By creating a value study before you add colour you can easily create fantastical detail with realistic depth without being distracted by colour. This will help you approach your references with a more analytical eye, too.



# Fantasy Art Skills



The semi-transparent creatures in this magical forest are made to look convincing by the rim-lighting effects and the objects visible behind them. A slight blur keeps them looking ethereal and bright highlights help them stand out.



## 03 Colour

I coloured the image using Overlay and Color layers in Photoshop. I chose a magenta hue for the leaves of the main tree to make it look obviously fantastical. Occult elements are often represented with highly saturated colours in this way.



## 04 Add details

I start to add details such as the plants and characters. Overlay and Screen layers are really handy when you are painting light. For example, when painting the lighting on the middle tree, I used a water splash brush on an Overlay layer.



## 05 Special effects

For the finishing touches, I duplicated all the layers then combined them (Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt+Shift+E). Then I blurred the whole image with a Blur filter and masked out the part that I wanted to keep sharp, which is the central focus area.

# Render reflective surfaces

Learn tips and techniques to paint specular and diffuse reflections on surfaces

**Everything we see is the product of reflected rays of light.**

However, before reaching our eyes, reflected light can hit and lighten other objects (creating diffuse reflections) or create mirror images (which are known as specular reflections).

When light hits, and bounces off, a rough surface, the rays disperse randomly creating a diffuse reflection. This light has the colour identity of that surface, for example, light from a red object will look red. If the light then hits a darker surface, it can brighten the shadow with that colour. If the reflected light is the same colour as the second surface, the result will be more saturated than the original colour. It's not simple but it's essential to know!

When light bounces off a smooth object like a mirror or water, the rays retain their original direction and can create a reverse version of an image. This type of specular reflection can be easily created by duplicating the layer to be reflected in your software, inverting it across the line of the mirror surface and changing the layer effect to get the look you're after. Blurring or softly erasing the far end of the reflection can help make it appear more realistic. Be careful of objects that overhang a reflective surface or are at a strange angle, though, because the mirror may see a different side of the object than the viewer and so transforming the layer will not work. You'll need to draw it manually in cases like this.

Specular and diffuse reflections are not exclusive (smooth surfaces create some diffuse reflections as well) and can be used together to create magical-looking effects.

“Blurring... the far end of a reflection can help make it appear more realistic”

Duplicating and flipping a layer is a quick and effective way to create a specular reflection. However, if the reflective surface sees a different side of the object than the viewer, transformations alone will not work.

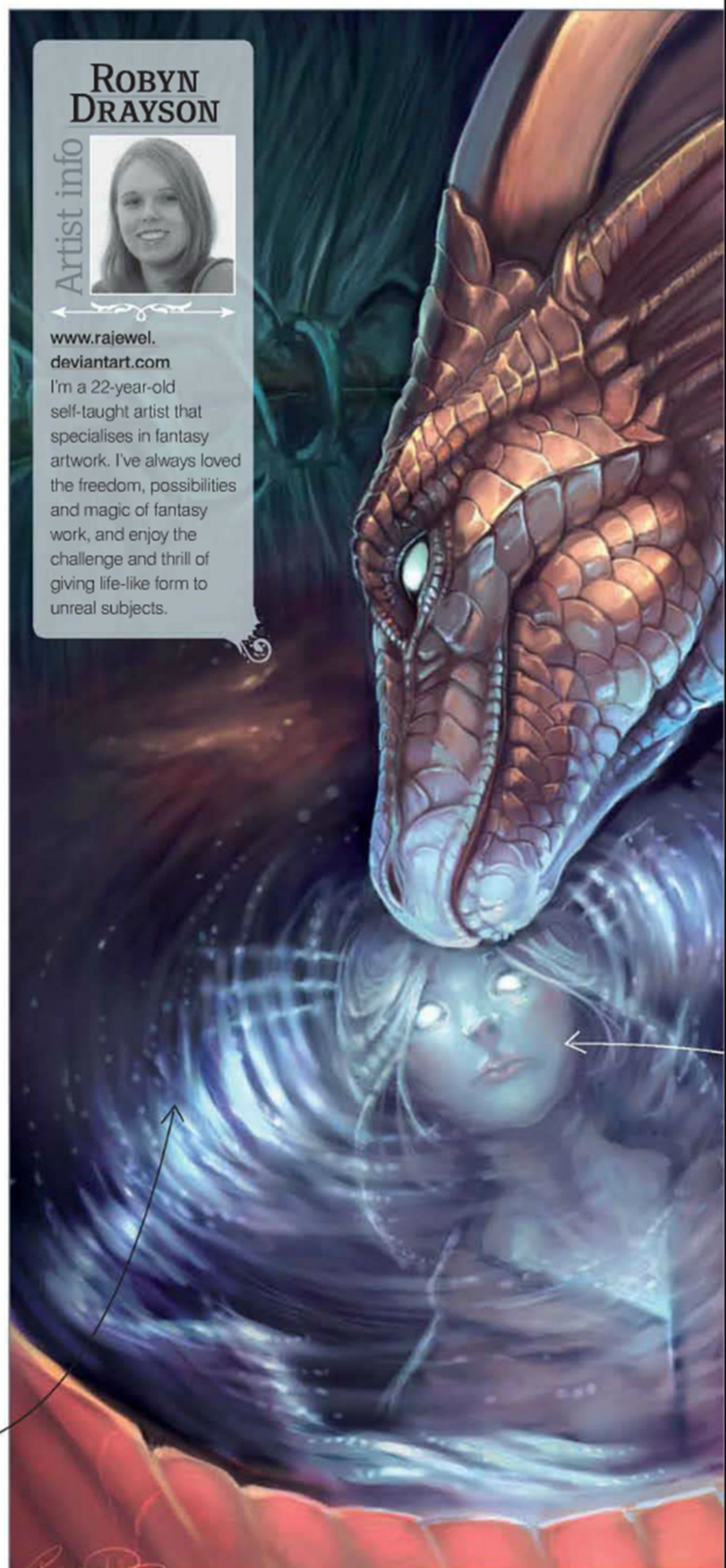
ROBYN  
DRAYSON

Artist info



[www.rajewel.deviantart.com](http://www.rajewel.deviantart.com)

I'm a 22-year-old self-taught artist that specialises in fantasy artwork. I've always loved the freedom, possibilities and magic of fantasy work, and enjoy the challenge and thrill of giving life-like form to unreal subjects.



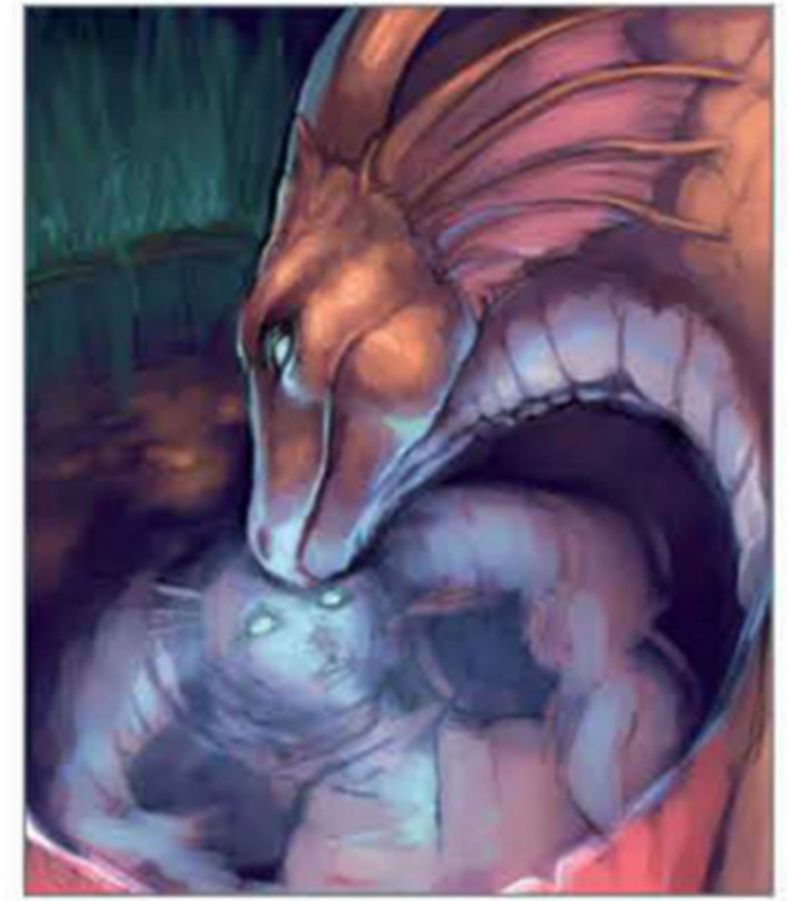
## Painting reflections

High contrast and defined edges between light and dark makes surfaces appear reflective. Pronounced diffuse reflections on the shadowed side enhance the appearance. Adding specular lights makes the surface look metallic.



### Plan the image

I start by making quick, loose sketches to establish the major components. Don't be afraid to scrap ideas until you find something you like. Once I find a base I'm happy with I make a new layer and create a more refined sketch.



### Block in colours

I lay down the basic colours under the sketch, and then merge these. This helps to keep the original feel of the sketch in the final image and define the edges. I continue blocking in the colours and establish shading on a layer above.



### Create the background

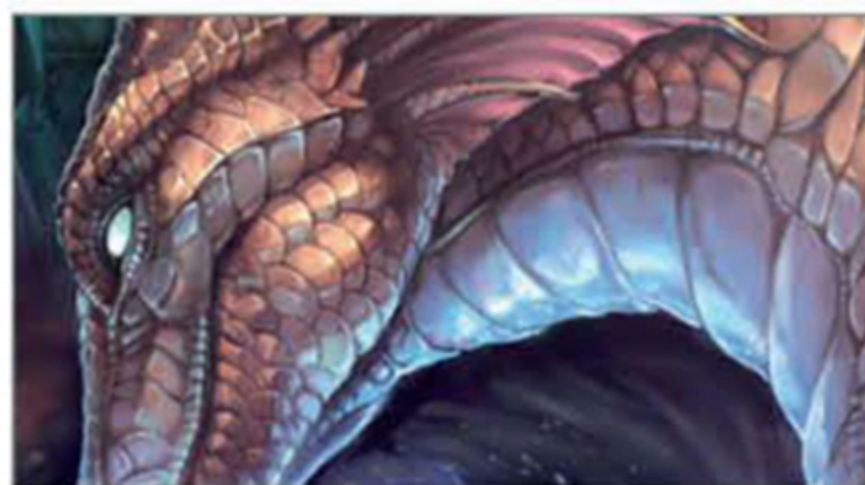
I start to refine areas using a smaller brush, and then duplicate and transform the grass to create the reflection on the water. I make the ripples by using a low-opacity smudging brush and create sparkles by using a layer set to Addition and drawing spots.



### Render the dragon

I continue building up the light and dark on the dragon before drawing in the outlines of the scales. I add further light and dark to establish the form of the scales, keeping in mind the overall shape of the dragon. I make the contrast between light and dark pronounced for a metallic look.

Specular and diffuse reflections come together to create an ethereal image of a lady in the water. The diffuse reflection means we don't need a lot of detail and results in vague reflections on the dragon's throat scales.



## Final touches

I adjust the levels (saturation, brightness and contrast), make minor alterations to colours, fix any mistakes that I see have slipped through to this stage and add other finishing touches to bring the image together. Flipping the image is really useful to recognise any problems with composition. Once I'm happy it's done!

# Draw mage characters

We show you how to conjure details for the classic types of magical characters

Today we'll be focusing on everyone's favourite eldritch heroes and villains. It has been said that the use of magic is like wielding a sword without a hilt, so it takes a special (or crazy) sort to take it up as their weapon of choice. Over these pages we'll be exploring five different archetypes of the magical order; a classic wizard, an evil witch, a beautiful sorceress, a gruff battle mage and a witch doctor or shaman.

It is important to capture the attitudes and personalities of the different characters. The bloodlust of the battle mage, the coyness of the sorceress, the loathing of the witch, the

caution and mistrust of the wizard and the sternness of the shaman are all important. Emotion, attitude and personality are every bit as important as their costume, and will even show through in it and add to it.

On the technical end, for these illustrations I used a freeware program called MyPaint because it has some fantastic tools specifically for inking so you can get some beautiful marks. Don't hesitate to play around with different techniques and discover your groove – that's the fun part! I mostly use Adobe Photoshop CS3 and MyPaint on a PC Windows 7 platform for my line and paint work.

“ Emotion, attitude and personality are every bit as important as costume ”

## MATTHEW OLSON

Artist info



[mattolsonart.deviantart.com](http://mattolsonart.deviantart.com)

Matt is a freelance illustrator and graphic designer. He has worked as a concept artist and had comic books published, including his original *InterGALactic* in the pages of *Heavy Metal* magazine.

The dark, inky brushes used to colour the bottom of the wizard's cloak, his fingernails and the detail on his face all suggest mystery and the arcane. He is a veteran magic user who has seen many dark times, and even encountered black magic.

## THE CLASSIC WIZARD

I tried to avoid the biggest stereotype of them all – the big pointy hat. I wanted him to have a long, worn robe and unkempt fingernails. Putting some of the emotion or attitude into the hands can really enhance the character and the scene. Hands can be almost as expressive and telling as a face.



## THE BROOM-BOUND HAG

Next up, the witch. Cold, vile and full of rage, she rides her broomstick with her familiar cat. Admittedly, the broom-riding bit is a little cliché, but it's important. I avoided the traditional wide-brimmed hat and replaced it with a pointed hood. I did so to maintain a good silhouette for the character without falling prey to convention. As with the wizard, I chose to give her sharp fingernails, but this time it wasn't a result of them being unkempt, it's intentional and they are pitch black.



## THE SHAMAN

The shaman has a deep connection with nature and animals. This gives you a lot of what you need already to decide what he or she will wear. Animal hides, feathers, wild plants or even (in this case) trees. For her pose I chose a fight-ready stance. This shaman is a bit less concerned with the harmonious balance with nature and more with utilising it as a power source. In this image she is deriving a power stream from the tree and wearing the skins of slain animals. As a good indicator of her power, and to match the power stream from the tree, her eyes glow with magic.



## THE BATTLE MAGE

The battle mage is the hybrid magic user. He has the kit of a warrior, but the skills of a wizard. I chose vaguely Roman armour for this one. He stands triumphantly with his leg raised on a battlefield stone and sends a jolt of arcane energy into his enchanted spear. I also gave him some battle scars on the face, showing he doesn't shy from the fray. His attitude is one of elation and bloodlust.



## THE SULTRY SORCERESS

The sorceress harkens back to Frazetta paintings with highly decorative and revealing robes with rich patterns. She has a strong connection with nature and wears patterns based on the traditional elements. In this case, she is related to water. The patterns on her robe are indicative of ocean waves and her jewellery is comprised of seashells and sea stones. As a sexier magic user, I rendered her more coy and relaxed than the others.





# Magical poses

## How to draw strong and dynamic characters in magical scenes

In this tutorial I will show you how to draw characters that use magic and how magic itself can be represented in various poses and actions. Whether it is launched, created or used for defence, the important thing is to make magic convincing and give the figure that uses it the correct strength and expression. These elements will give an injection of life to your scene.

The magic used by many comic-book, cartoon or movie characters is represented in various forms and elements. Some of these may be natural such as air, earth, fire and water, or they may be energy elements such as lightning, waves of energy or shields.

These items, along with many others, are born from the character's inner strength and power. However, before you let your character shoot fire you have to give the body an expressive pose that will make it clear what type of magic he is going to use and how much force he is putting into it to make the image more dynamic.

To do so you must draw your character in the right pose and express the proper tension of the muscle structure. For example, the muscles will be swollen and contracted if there is a lot of effort needed to create the magic, otherwise they will be relaxed. More powerful magic will require stronger muscle tension. A good knowledge of human anatomy and of the action of muscles will help represent your character.

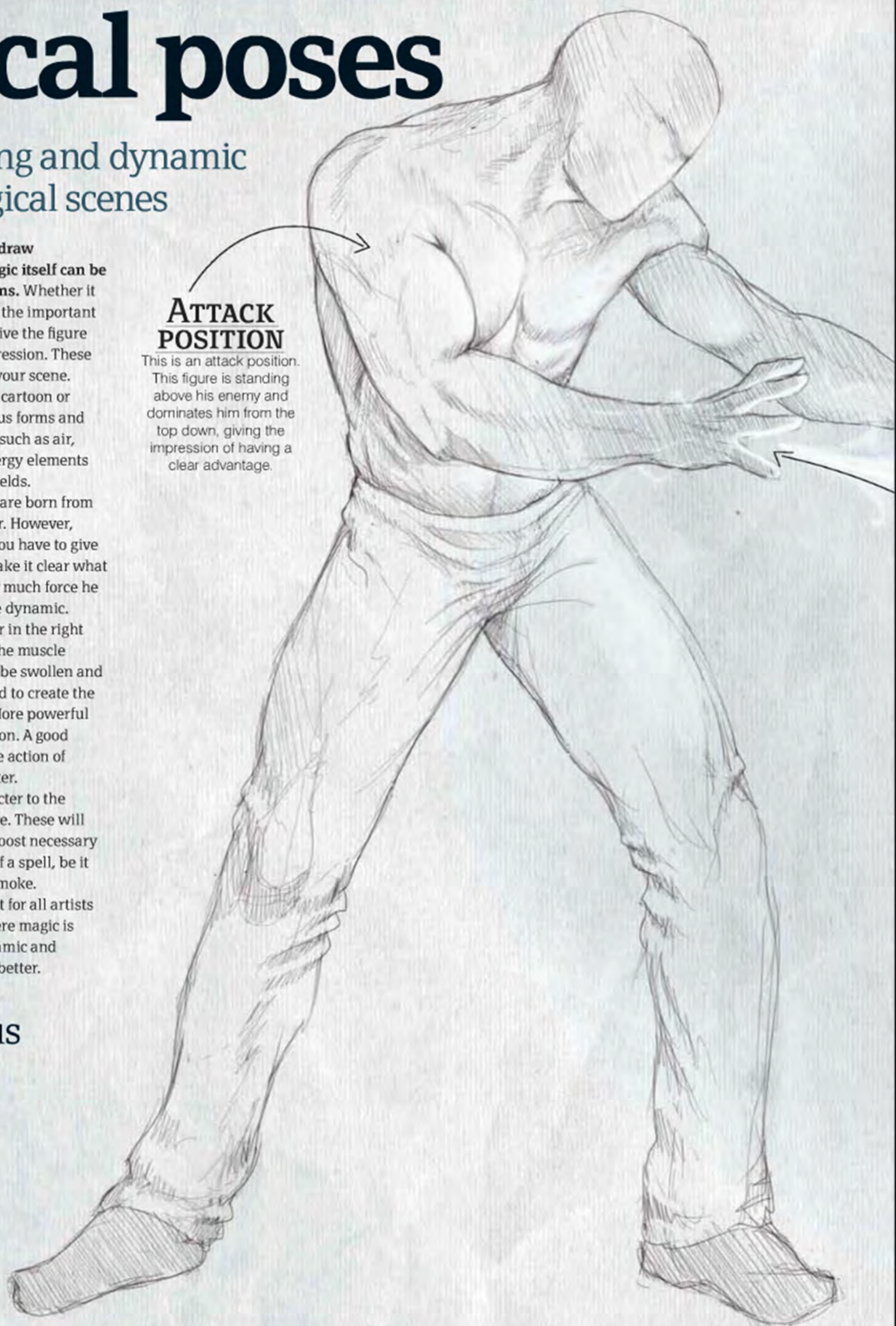
If you want to give impetus and character to the figure, I recommend you use lines of force. These will help give your figure elasticity and the boost necessary to represent a movement or the launch of a spell, be it invisible or shown by lighting, lines or smoke.

These small details are very important for all artists who want to draw and make scenes where magic is used. Your scene will become more dynamic and attention grabbing, and it tells the story better.

“ To give impetus and character to the figure... use lines of force ”

### ATTACK POSITION

This is an attack position. This figure is standing above his enemy and dominates him from the top down, giving the impression of having a clear advantage.



## MAGIC FIRE

This character is attacking his opponent with a magical jet of fire that comes out of his hands. The hands assume a contracted position of considerable tension for the effort they are making.

## MAGIC SHIELD

To defend himself from the attack of his opponent, this character has created a barrier that protects him from fire. His hands are wide open to expand the shield and his muscles are contracted by the effort.



## How to represent a figure using magic

How can you express the weight of magic? In this image there are two figures creating a spell with their hands. The male character is creating a big ball of energy and the effort to create it is very large, as you can see from his posture. His weight is balanced all over the body, and the muscles of his arm and torso show tension and contraction.

The woman's figure is firm and plastic, effortless and tensionless – she generates electricity in her hand with ease and this shows in her posture.

## HANDS

Their hands are the focal point of this drawing; the gestures express the characters' action and their effort. All their energy is concentrated in their hands to release the magic.

## DEFENCE POSITION

This figure is trying to defend himself from the attack of his opponent. The figure is kneeling in order to keep his balance and to release the line of force to the ground.

## GIUSEPPE DI GIROLAMO

Artist info



[www.peppeti.blogspot.it](http://www.peppeti.blogspot.it)

[blogspot.it](http://www.peppeti.blogspot.it)

I'm a freelance illustrator, character designer, artist and musician. I live in Palermo and study development graphics at the Academy of Fine Arts. I also belong to a gaming design team.

# How to pose your characters

A plastic expression of the body and an accurate definition of their gestures will give strength and life to your characters

To make the magic more credible you have to make the structure of your figure as expressive as possible to make the viewer feel the effort the characters are undertaking to launch the magic. Here we will look at a range of poses you can use in your art to show this kind of scene and the tension it requires.

These poses are; throwing magic, creating a shield, sending out a wave of force, summoning creatures, summoning the dead and flying.

To make all of these action scenes you should use the lines of force to boost the action and make your characters more believable.

## SUMMONING

Here is a character who, with his magic, awakens the dead from eternal slumber. The main figure puts his hands and arms above him as if he were lifting something heavy, his muscles are tense and swollen with the effort and his hands contain the glow of the magic he is using. The corpse under his feet is lifting a clump of earth to come out, illuminated by magic sparks and beams of light.



## LEVITATING

In this sketch the female character is slowly trying to rise in the air with magic, as if it were the first flight. Her shoulders, her chest and her legs are bent to try to keep the balance and avoid falling. Under her feet a luminous vortex of air enables her to levitate.

## CALLING THE BIG CAT

To represent the summoning of a creature, this female figure is in a classic and very plastic pose. She brings up her right hand before her, palm down. Beams of magic come out that accumulate before her, forming a big translucent cat to help her in times of danger.



# Fantasy Art Skills

## WAVE ENERGY

Here is a character who accumulates all his strength on the chest, calling into play a large and powerful wave of magic that runs in front of him. His arms are open and his hands clenched to express the considerable effort necessary to accumulate so much energy. The energy itself is represented with electric shocks, forming a sphere from which the wave is launched.

## ELECTRIC WHIP

In this sketch the figure is launching an electric shock like a whip coming out of his hand. The pose is very streamlined to represent the strong momentum necessary to cast the spell. The invisible line of force that crosses this action goes from his right foot – loosely defined to enhance the movement – up to the right shoulder, passing the hand to the tip of the electric shock.

## PROTECTIVE DOME

This female character has created a shield around herself to defend against enemy attacks. The figure is crouched to the ground and the arms brought before her face to make the viewer perceive the sense of danger in action. The dome of protective magic around her is spherical, made of smoke and light electric shocks.

# Evolution of an image

Rodrigo Ramos explains the process for this hellish image

## Rodrigo Ramos

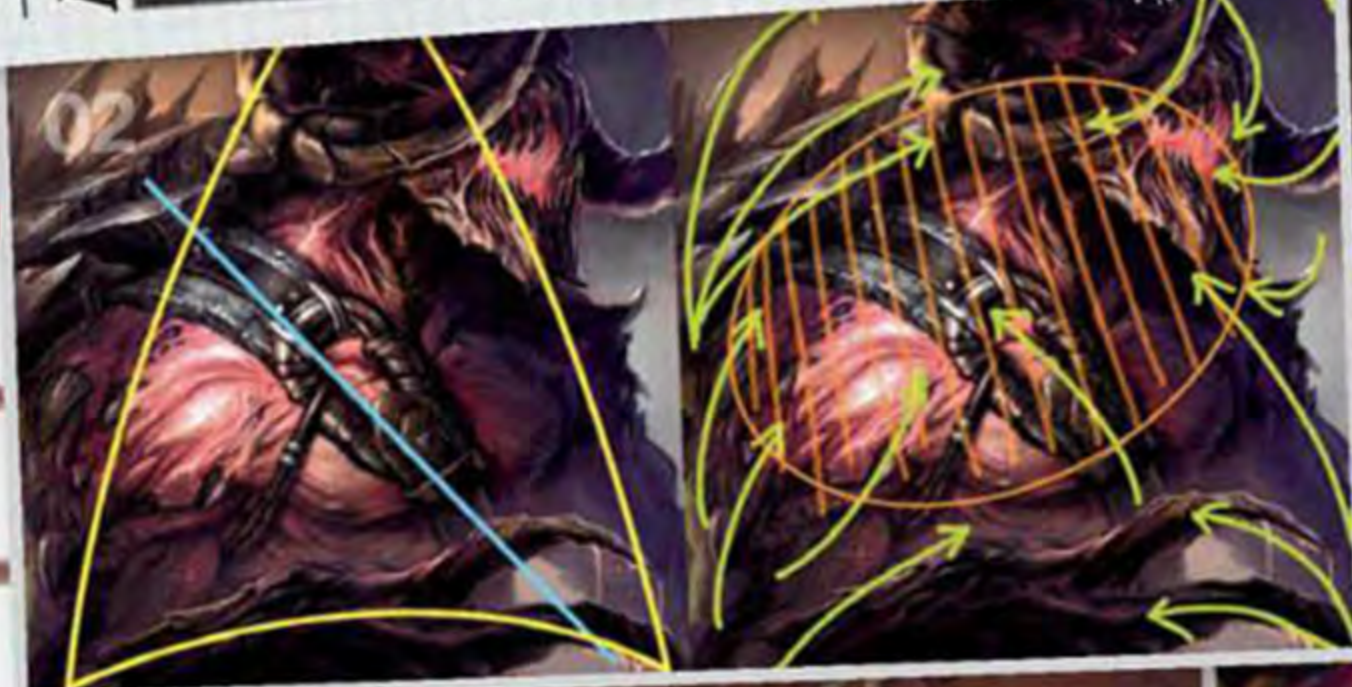
Artist info



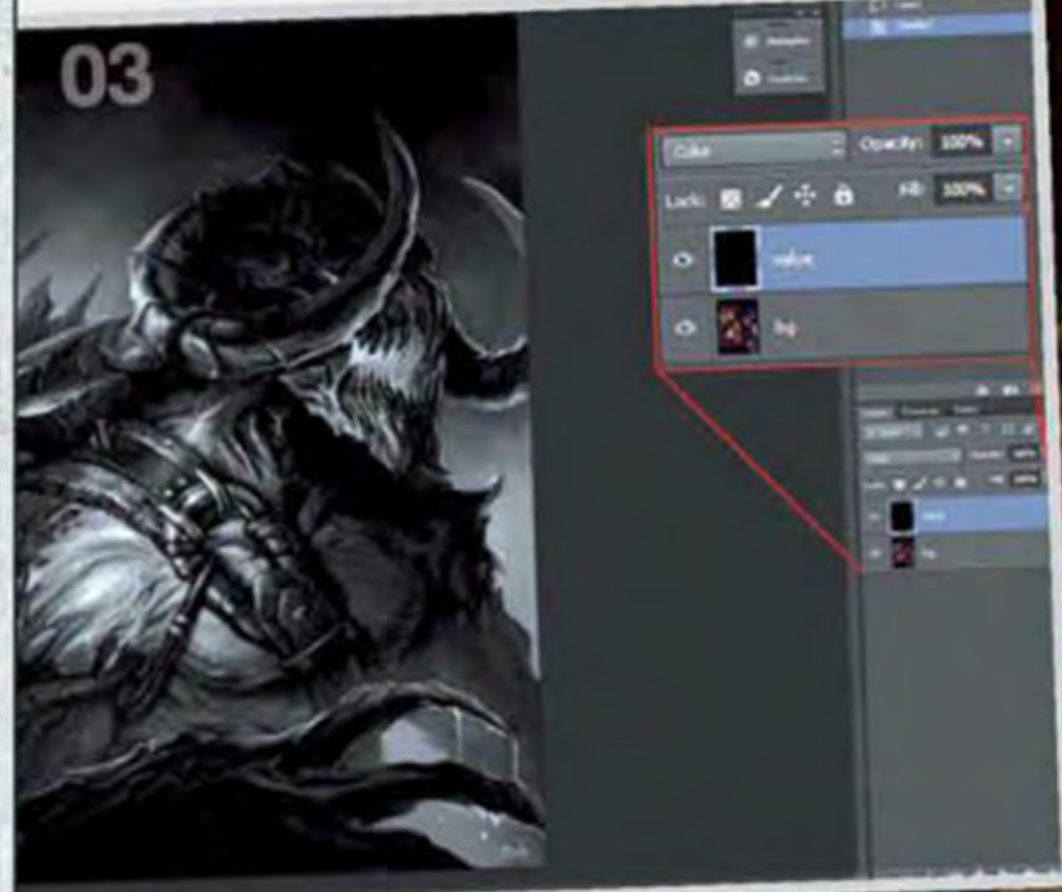
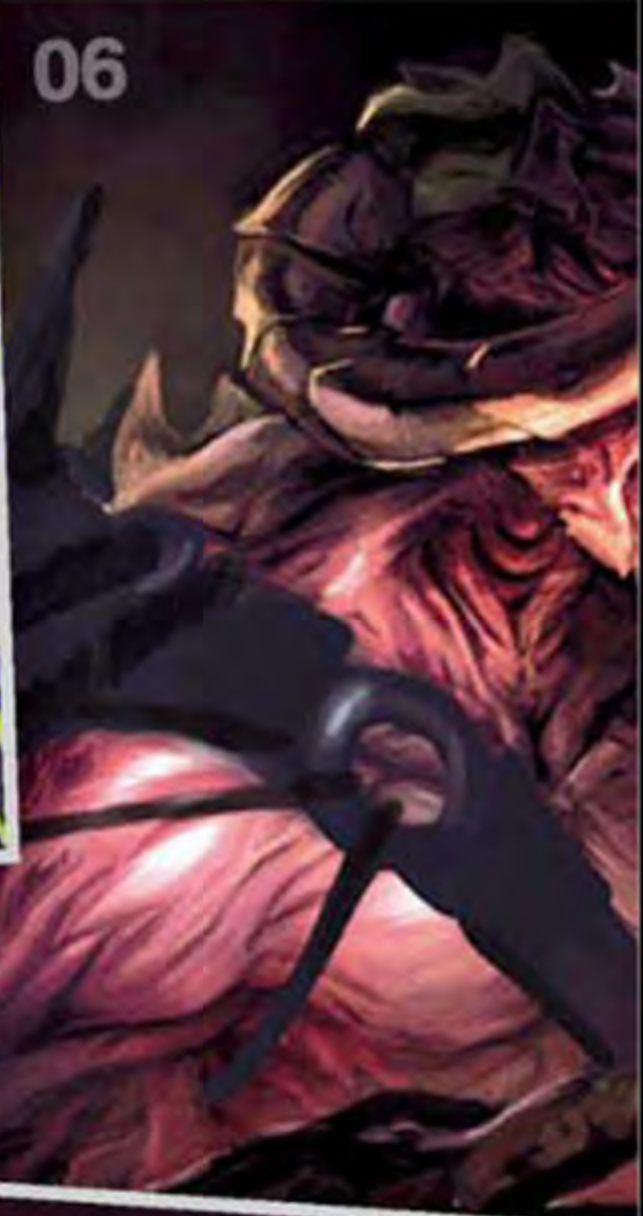
rodg.com.br

Software used Photoshop

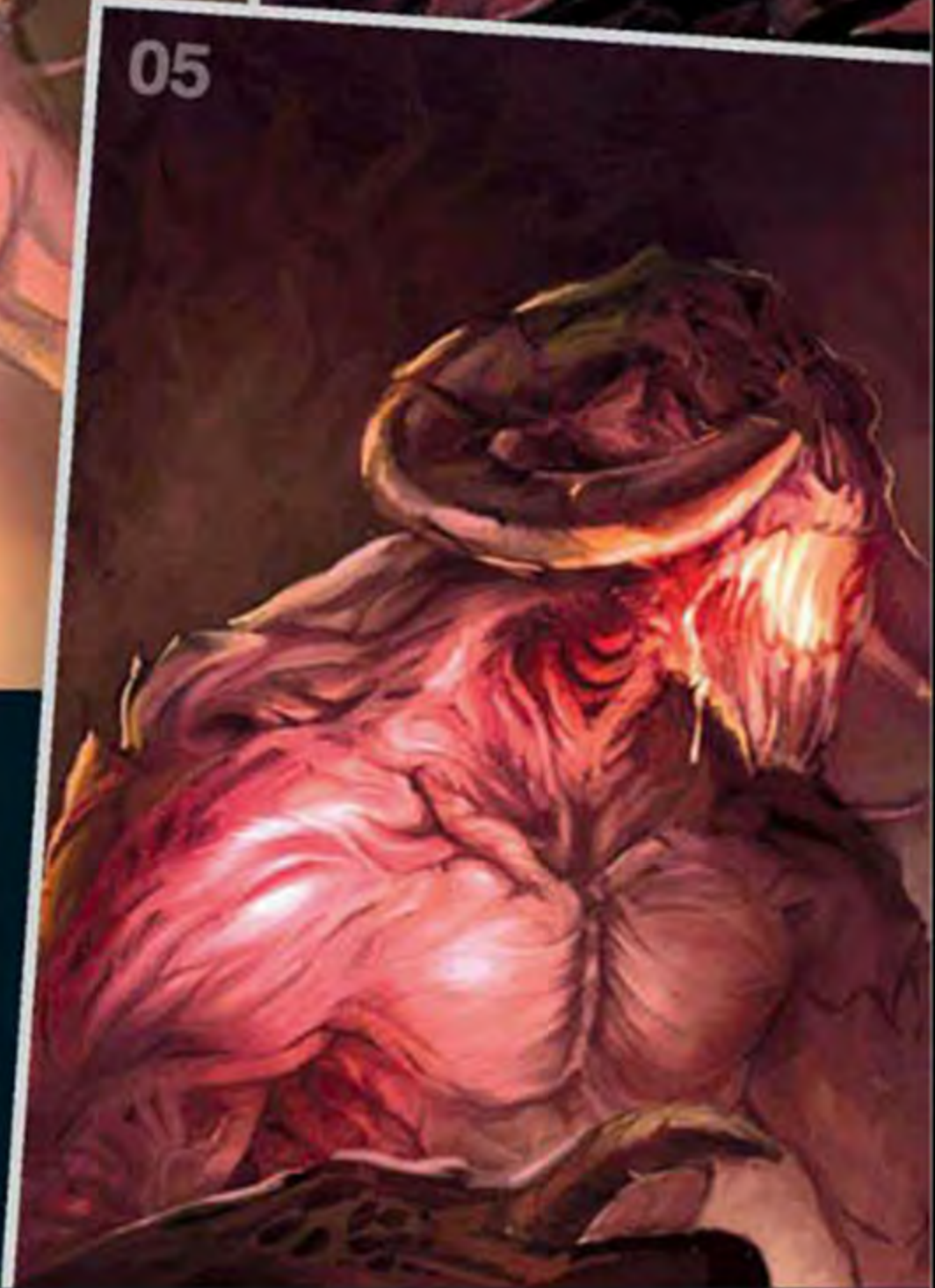
I was always interested in art and learned almost everything I know by myself with influence from other artists. My focus is 2D art, mainly digital painting for illustration and concept art, however, I have experience with traditional drawing and painting as that is where I began my art journey.



06



05



## About Hell Breaker

I started this illustration while waiting for the release of *Diablo III*. The concept was a creature that is almost blind wandering through hell attacking anything in its way. I tried to draw the demon without visual references, only my repertoire that I have accumulated over the years, but, of course, *Diablo* was one of my biggest influences. I realised that the sketch could result in a good illustration and invested about a week to finalise it, trying to work hard on the render and composition.

01

In this illustration I used four brushes with distinct presets. The Chalk brush created the base, with the Hard Round brush for sharp lines. The Soft Round brush made smooth tonal transitions and the Dry brush was great for the armour.

02

The pyramidal composition provides balance and the diagonal makes the image more dynamic. The forms contribute to the sense of movement and tend to converge at the focal point, indicated by the orange circle.

03

To better visualise the values, I normally create a layer filled with black in Color mode and activate it whenever I want to check if these are correct. With the image in greyscale, you can make sure you get the balance of tones right across the image.

04

I opted for a process closer to traditional painting, using just one layer. I started a sketch with a few lines, trying to find the proportions and angle I wanted. Then, on a layer below, I began to paint the base colours, keeping the mood in mind.

05

After the proportions were defined, I decided to give more emphasis to the devil by setting the framework and creating a spot of light in the middle of the image, increasing the contrast and drama. I added his forearm in at the bottom to give more balance to the composition. At this point, I hadn't finalised the look of the body. The initial idea was to render muscles and bones for an exposed look.

“ I opted for a process closer to traditional painting, using just one layer... to find the proportions ”



**06**

I figured that the demon could look more aggressive, so I added shoulder armour with rude, spiked shapes to reflect his claws and teeth. Since I wasn't sure about this element yet, I painted it on another layer to preserve the details of the body. I made the scene darker and also decreased the light from the mouth, because I wanted the main focal point to be the shoulder area.

**07**

The next step was to start working on the textures and add backlights to create a warm and smoky atmosphere. I added very reflective metal hoops and hooks to break the monotony of the materials and give some interesting highlights. The skin looked too smooth at this stage, so I tried to create more imperfections and crevices to make it look scaly and rough.

**08**

Since the illustration was coming along nicely, I merged down the shoulder armour's layer with the main image. I was happy that I wanted it to be a permanent part of the image so I started to work on the details, giving it shadows and highlights. At this point the biggest challenge was to get a sharply defined focal area, so I added some veins and spikes coming out of the skin.

**09**

I figured that the shoulder armour could be made of a material that resembled primitive, rustic metal, so I raised and enhanced some parts and started adding marks and flaws to give texture. Since the shade is more intense on the right side of the body, some volume detail disappeared. An indirect light coming from the right served to rescue these forms, mainly in the face.

**10**

In the final step, I worked more on all of the elements mentioned previously. The intention was to give less importance to his eye, represented only by a cleft, because he is a nearly blind creature and acts motivated only by hate. I added final details such as pins and other metallic touches, flowing lava and sparks to emphasise the hellish environment.



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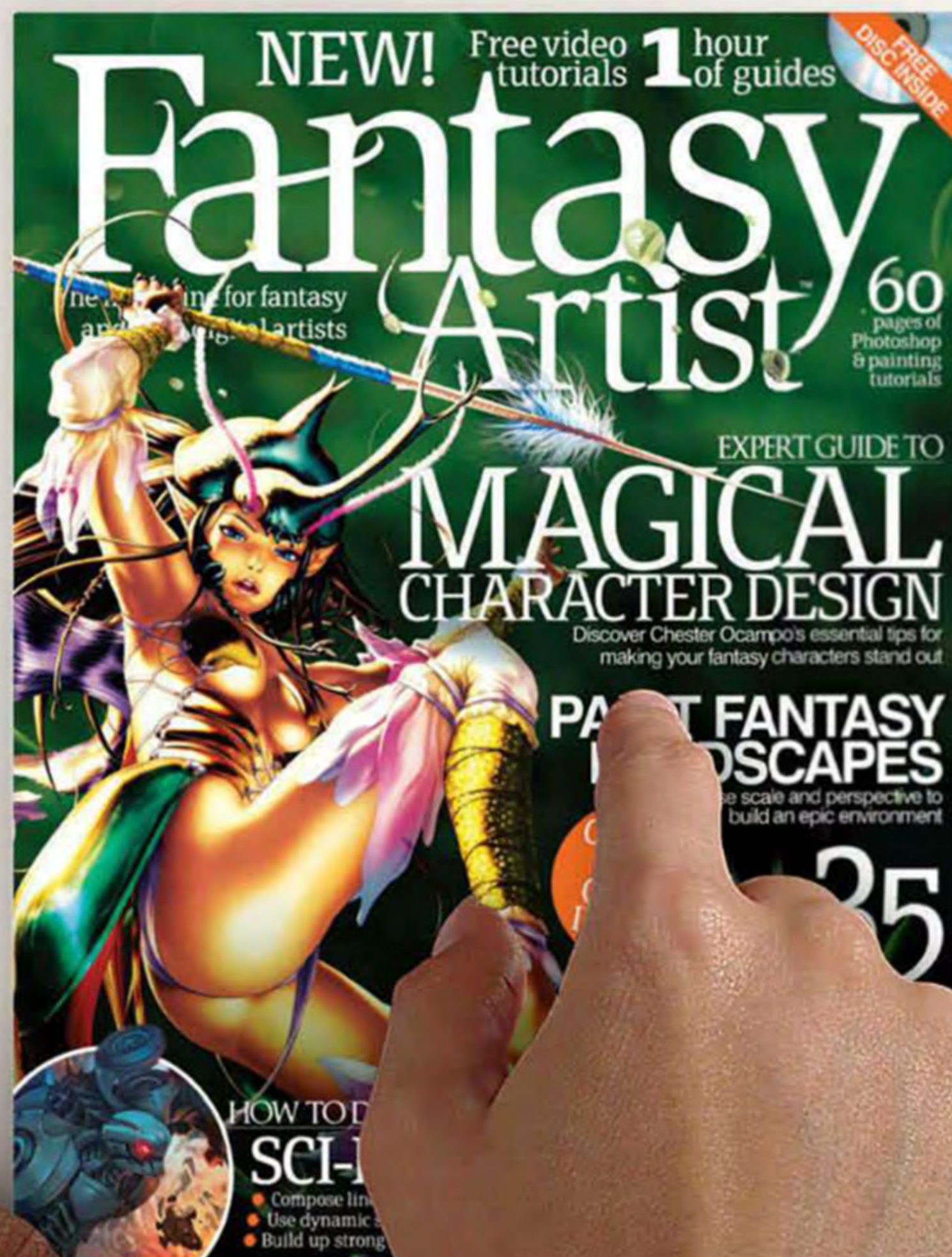
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# Paint sci-fi action scenes

**Mauricio Herrera** demonstrates how to bring dynamism and action to your sci-fi scenes

Alien Mecha Attack

*Photoshop*



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Andrew 'Android' Jones  
shows you how he created  
this vibrant album artwork  
for the band DragonForce

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# Design a cyberpunk album cover



**Jaclyn Havlak**, executive producer at The Art Department, reveals how Andrew 'Android' Jones created this sci-fi cover for rock band DragonForce's album Ultra Beatdown

Ultra Beatdown - DragonForce album cover

*Painter, Photoshop, & Brush*

**JACLYN HAVLAK**

Artist info



[theartdepartment.org](http://theartdepartment.org)

Jaclyn Havlak, aka Texas-based radio personality Jacki-OH, is executive producer and creative director at The Art Department, as well as an established art director and UI designer. She walks **Fantasy Artist** readers through the content in this video tutorial.



It seems that only yesterday the idea of digital art was the tiny, pixelated icons known as clip art, used in applications for word processing or presentations. The first clip art wasn't even electronic or computer generated at all, though – the term originated from the much more analogue process of cutting and pasting parts of pre-printed work together.

Now, (especially for readers of magazines like **Fantasy Artist**) using a pair of scissors and a glue stick as tools for design creation sounds more like punishment than a means of creative expression... possibly evoking long-suppressed memories of collecting macaroni in early schooling. Of course, artists in the present day still maintain traditional drawing and painting methods – and probably always will – but many, many more are expanding their techniques to include the immeasurable power and flexibility of digital technology.

One such artist, Andrew Jones, needs no introduction – affirming just how far digital art has

Andrew begins his ideation the same way every time – by creating a custom palette of textures, tools and brushes of related elements and geometric shapes



come since the dawn of desktop publishing, when clip art was the next big thing. Upon viewing his extraordinary body of work, it is clear that Andrew has pushed the limits of digital tools to unbelievable heights. From an early stage, Corel Painter was upgrading and adding features specifically for Andrew in order to accommodate just about everything his imagination could dream up.

It has been said that digital art pales in comparison to the time-honoured skillsets of past

masters, but one look at any piece from Andrew's body of work could convince even the most prehistoric art teacher that digital art and the technology and software that makes it possible is comparable to traditional work and methods, at the very least.

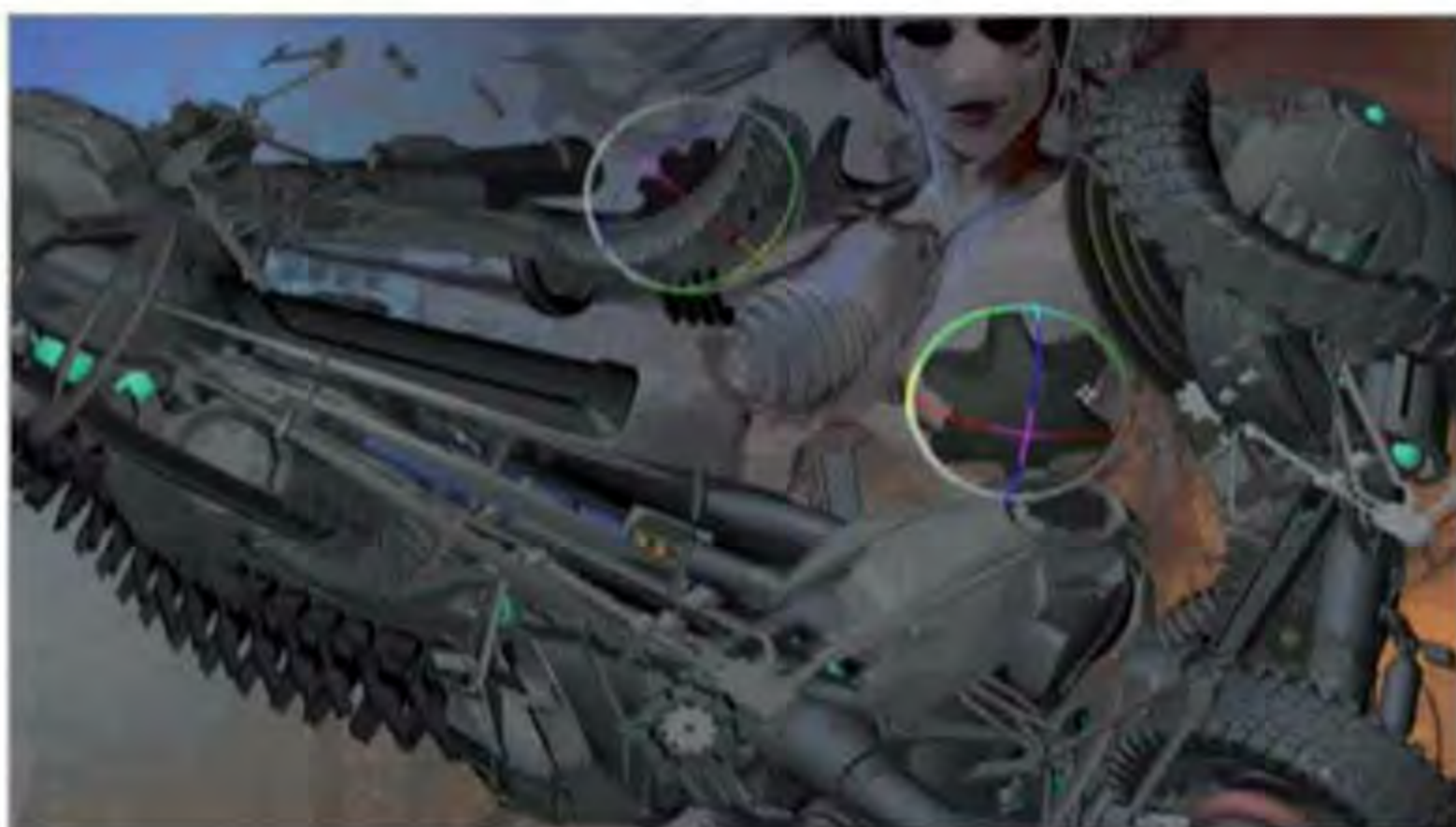
In the video tutorial included with this issue of **Fantasy Artist**,



Andrew places special emphasis on arranging his palette of "meaningless" objects into "something meaningful"



Andrew uses aggressive shapes to illustrate the rocky nature of the band's music, but contrasts this with delicate female features



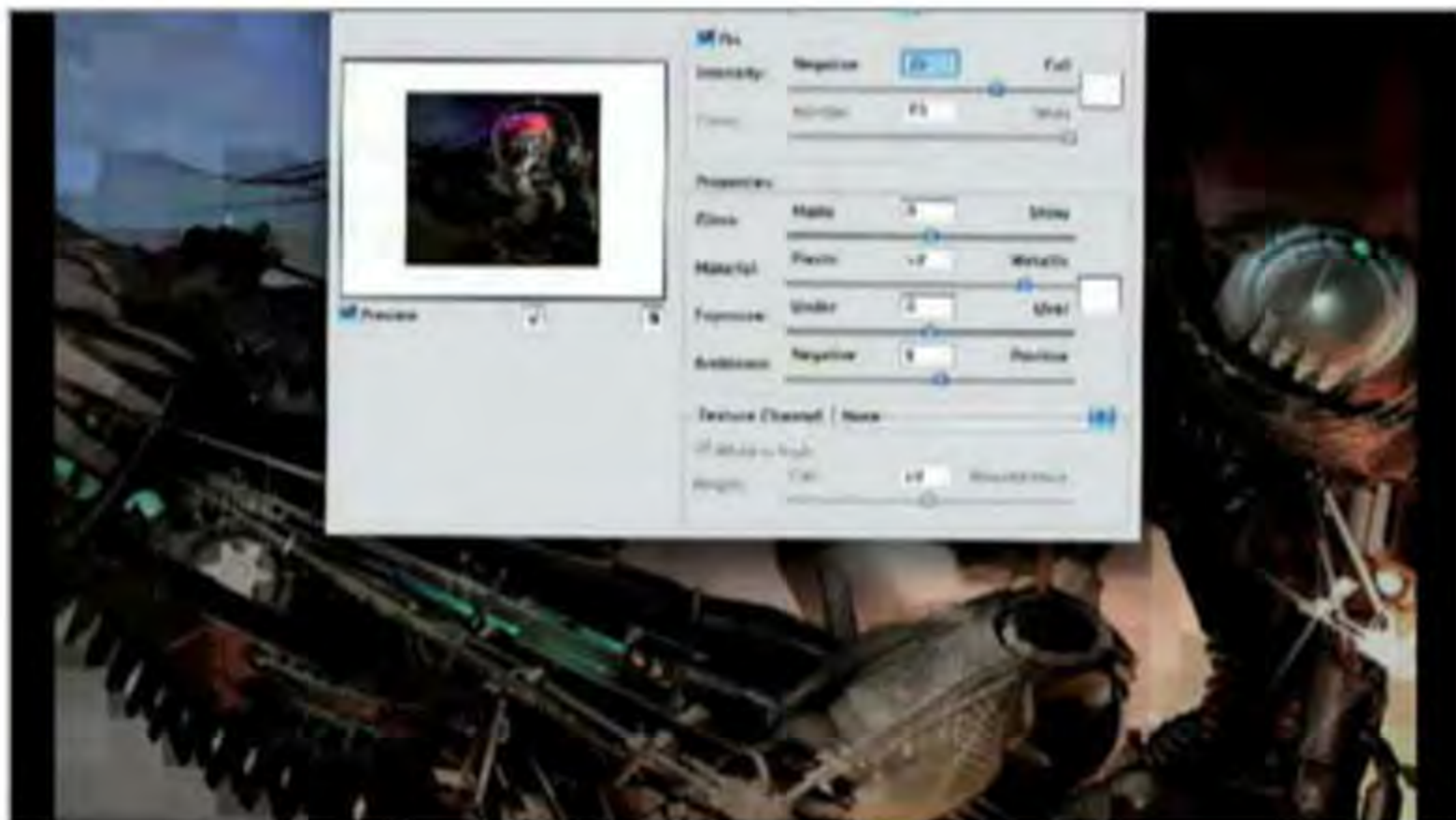
• No stranger to the advantages of digital painting, Andrew exploits the automatic 3D rendering of the figure in ZBrush rather than painting and building up the shapes in 2D

+ Andrew narrates as he creates the cover art for the DragonForce rock album *Ultra Beatdown*. Andrew fully depends upon the freedom afforded by digital technology, leveraging that freedom for the spontaneous creation he is admired for. This kind of impulsive visual expression can be intimidating to even the most experienced of conventional picture makers, but in the digital realm, as Andrew says, "it's never too late to change your mind."

Forget smudgy canvases or mismatched paint colours – almost every option can be and is explored – working on his customised Wacom tablet with his stylus pen, both expertly configured to his exact needs. That kind of simple mark-making seems far-fetched and unconvincing to produce high-quality art, but Andrew gladly shares the surprisingly simple techniques he employs when he puts stylus to tablet.

Bypassing convention from the start, he does not begin by drawing thumbnails or sketching concepts. His initial ideation begins the same way every time; by creating a custom palette of textures, tools and brushes comprised of related elements and geometric shapes. The palette objects are assembled from his personal arsenal of photographs and imagery, as well as many from the endless supply of visual inspiration on the internet. By creating a new palette for each

• The final steps – subtle shifts in light, luminance and hue – are the icing on the cake of Andrew's artwork



• Another example of the power of digital painting is the ability to try different solutions without a commitment



• One of Andrew's most commonly used weapons is using the Lasso tool to make selective adjustments

project and restricting his options to only the most suitable, Andrew avoids over-stimulation, while simultaneously clearing his work area of tools and dialog-box clutter, creating a larger canvas to paint.

His approach to the creative process is much more organic than one might imagine; placing special emphasis on arranging his palette of random, "meaningless" objects into "something meaningful." Every possibility is explored and each compositional element discovered as it is revealed by the artist.

"The less attached you are to what you are doing, the more you will enjoy the process... leave room for happy accidents... I don't rely on happy accidents, I create landing strips for them!"

Andrew communicates his intentions with clarity and light-hearted humour, discussing the benefits of all three software platforms, as he alternates between Painter, Photoshop and ZBrush. Taking time to explain important things in detail, he outlines a relatively short list of somewhat obvious and rather unremarkable strategic steps, along with the ever-important task of remaining true to the purpose of his client and the design as a whole.

Uncomplicated as his formula may be, the end result of each work of art Andrew releases is anything but typical. The simplicity of his approach, an extensive traditional art background and his explosive digital painting expertise form the creative process that you can follow along with.

“The less attached you are to what you are doing, the more you will enjoy the process”

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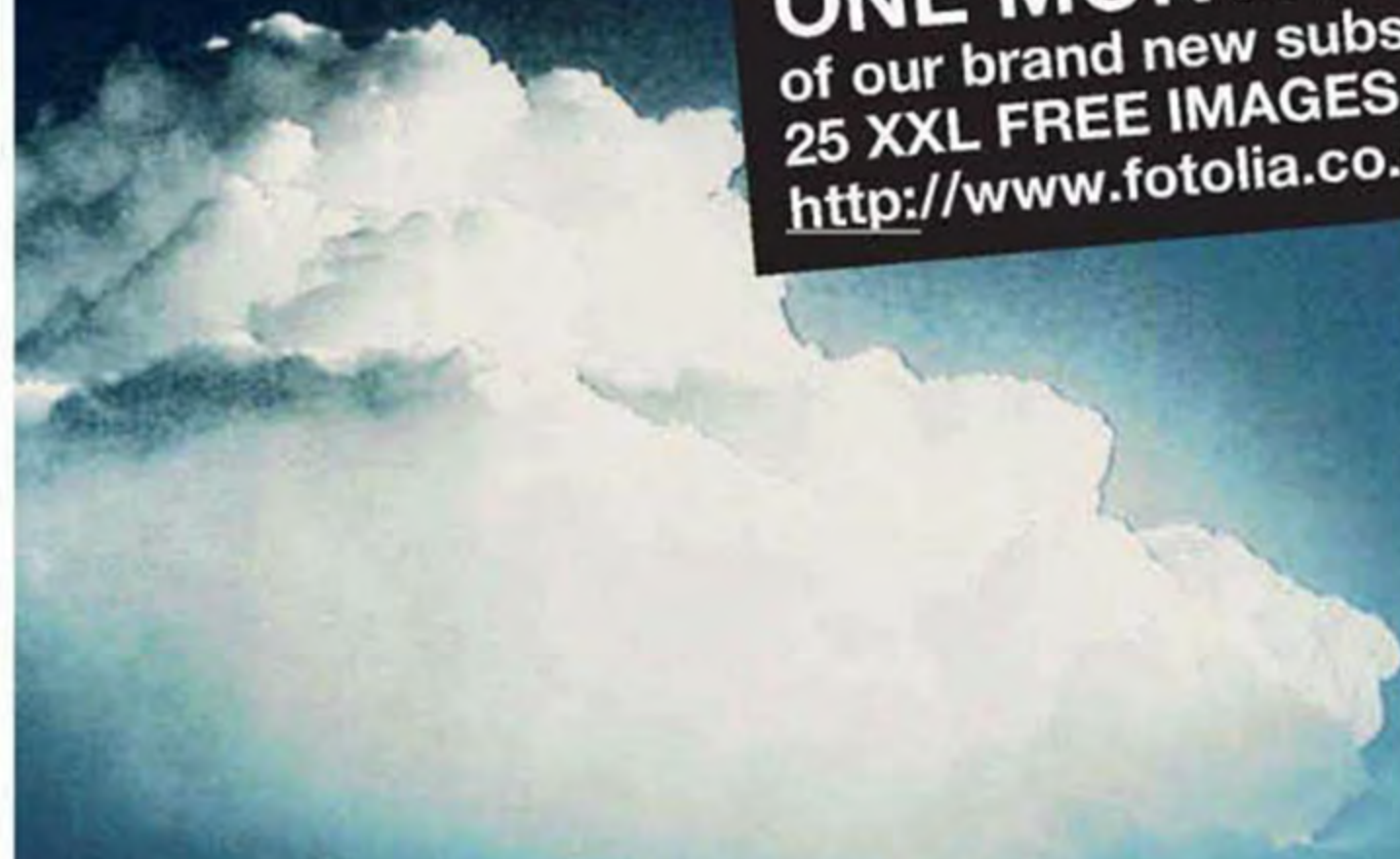
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